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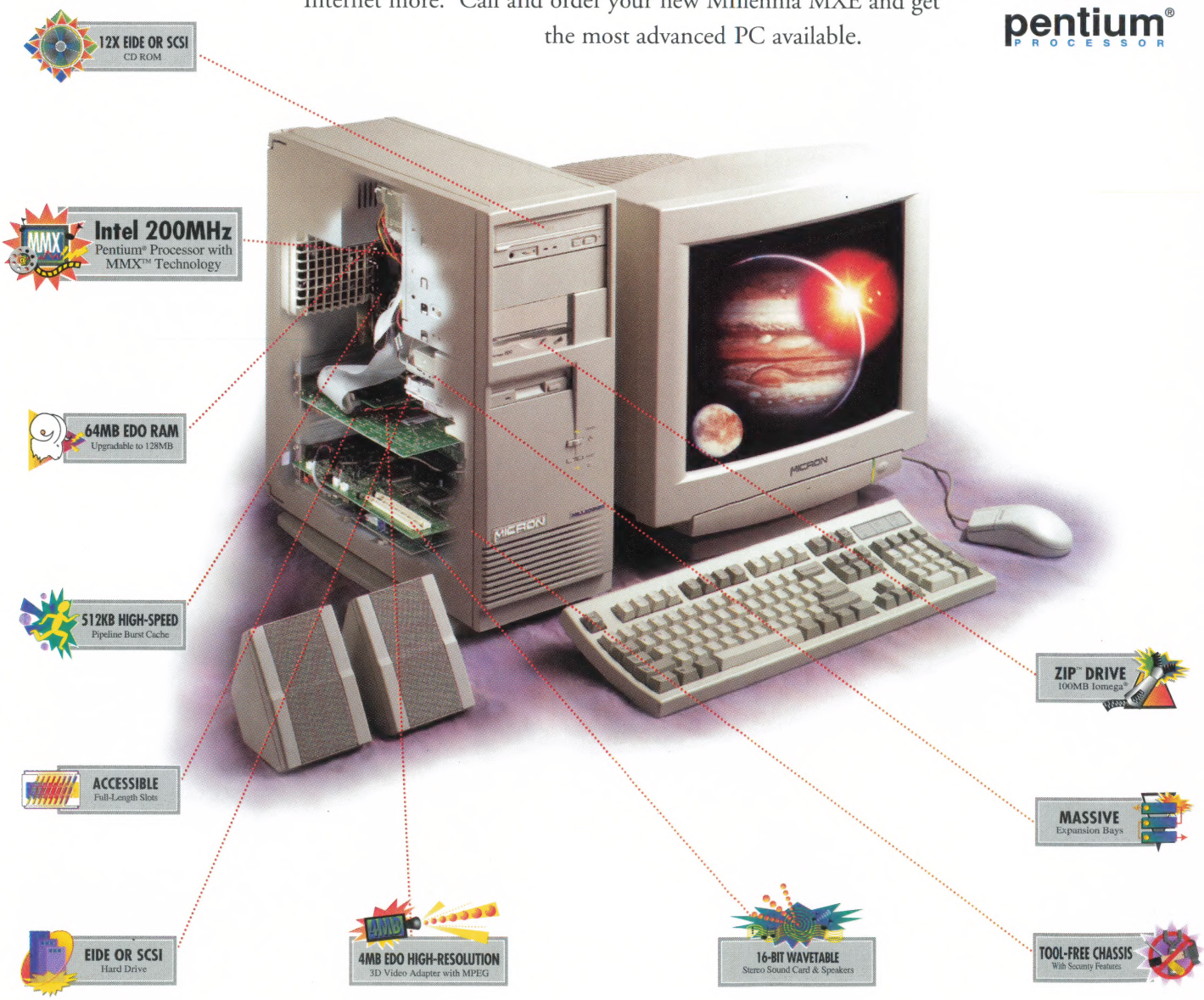

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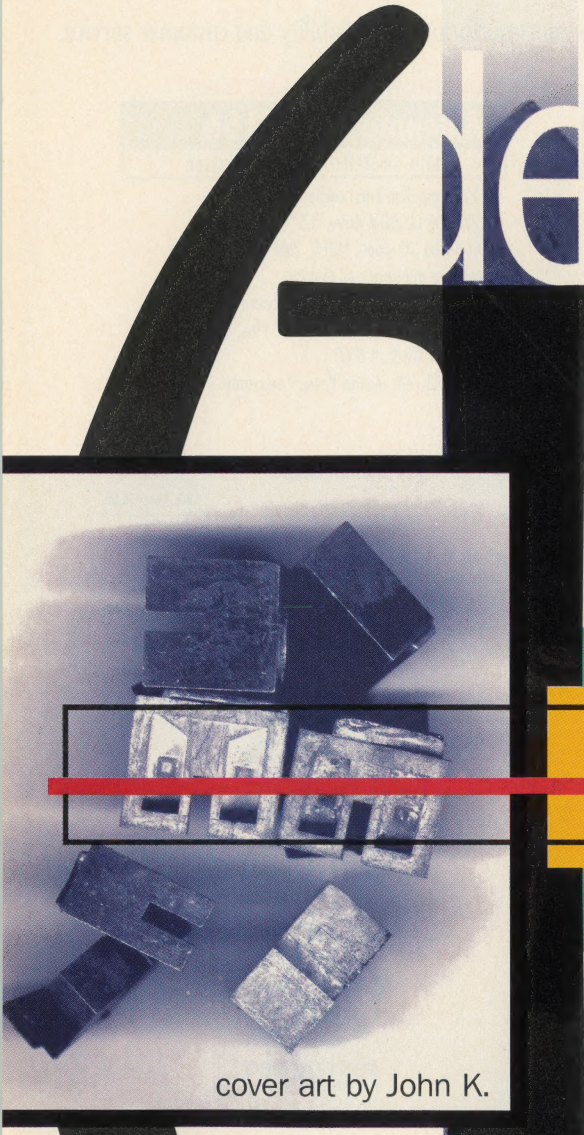

cover art by John K.

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4 INSIDE THE UNDERGROUND
IU is like a box of chocolates, if chocolates were big and flat and cost $6.50 in Canada.

6 MASTHEAD
We were going to give you the definition of "masthead" from the dictionary, but why should we do all the work for you?

7 HYPERLINK
This month's letter from the editors reveals why we're in such a rebellious mood.

8 E-MAIL
No, you don't *have* to use e-mail to get in touch with *IU*. You can write us a letter, you can commune with us spiritually or you can send us a singing telegram.

12 NET TOP TEN
Sites that make the honor roll and have a lot of extracurricular activities.

14 ALT.CULTURE.WATCH
Archie joins the digital age, Marc Andreessen takes his lumps and a special report on the Net's most disturbing trend.

16 NETLINE
The new domain-name disputes, the last-ditch efforts of death-row inmates and the answer to why your last phone bill had all those calls to Moldova on it.

22 WEIRD ON THE WEB
Sites that sit in detention hall and draw unflattering pictures of the teacher.

70 403 FORBIDDEN
Cybersitter is supposed to be an alternative to government censorship, but after they filter out everything that's offensive, is there anything left to look at?

71 WEBGUIDE
Our categories *du jour* are Hacking, Science Fiction and Cartoons; we recommend them with a bottle of Pouilly-Fuissé and a packet of Prozac. We also recommend tipping the maître d' if you don't want to get stuck in the corner by the kitchen.

81 FLAMETHROWER
Beyond the CDA: how restrictions on encryption software infringe on the right to free speech.

82 AT LARGE
"Land's sakes, Jethro, turn off that Web whuddayacallit afore Granny gits a headache."

the

26 ZEN AND THE ART OF HACKING
by Richard Thieme
It takes more than long hair and a cool handle to make you legit. We separate the real hackers from the scores of pretenders.

35 SHOW US THE CHEESE
by Gloria Mitchell, Sarah Ellerman and Alex Gordon
The Web is awash in cheesy corporate sites. We bite the bullet, grab some barf bags and report back on the good, the bad and the Fertnel.

42 *IU*'S FUN AND GAMES PAGE
Hey kids, have we got a treat for you!

44 CHEATERS DO PROSPER
by Steve Knopper
Cheaters never prosper? Term-paper peddlers on the Net are proving that old adage wrong.

50 FUTURE SCHLOCK
by Charles Platt
Why is the first virtual world's fair being held in San Antonio instead of on your computer?

56 CONTRABANDWIDTH
by Richard P. Greenfield
Knives, porn, drugs, even Fabio calendars—exploring the seamy side of Net commerce.

62 ON THE NET WITH...JOHN K.
by Rob Bernstein
They're better than bad, they're good! Quality time with the creator of *Ren & Stimpy*.

68 FAQ: BEING-IN NOW
by Mark Katzman
Michael Gosney's Digital Be-In helps expand the collective consciousness of the Net.

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letter from the editors

REBELS WITHOUT A PAUSE

Something Frank Zappa once said has been on our minds recently: *"When there are other options and a whole nation CHOOSES CHEESE, that is WEIRD."*

We agree. And things are getting pretty damn weird, in regard to netizens choosing cheese. We like to think that most Net-users reject cheese, yet we keep seeing banner ads and promotional stickers hawking commercial sites that offer more than a little *fromage*.

We mean, *really*. Who OK'd the big budget for that mayonnaise site? How expensive was that Chicago billboard that featured nothing but a Payday bar and its Web address? And why did so many members of the sloppily dressed press get Guess Jeans mousepads—complete with URLs?

You'll find the answer on our cover this month, which features animator John Kricfalusi's demented Jimmy the Idiot Boy character toying with his newest plaything—the "Corporate Moron Doll."

Why are we being so blunt? Well, the Net is the ultimate practical joke. In the olden days, capitalist bloodsuckers used to sit around and think of new ways to part us fools with our money, but then along came the Net. They were stumped. Everything was turned upside down. Everything was free. And now, we have thousands of superbly-coiffed marketing professionals jumping through hoops to make their brands and sites appeal to a bunch of *geeks*.

In our cover story, "Show Us the Cheese!" the *IU* staff dutifully accepted all those corporate invitations to visit their cheesy sites. We report back from the front lines, exposing such silly gimmicks as The Great Mayo Blaster and Fabio mousepads, and give you the straight dope on that waxy yellow foodstuff that's getting pushed down your throat.

Accompanying us on our romp is the cheerfully anti-establishment animation studio Spumco. Kricfalusi, Spumco's president, made his mass-media debut with the charmingly repulsive *Ren & Stimpy*. Creative differences with network execs led the artist to new projects and a new attitude. Spumco's new efforts include Björk's "I Miss You" video, a Nike ad and cartoons featuring Yogi Bear's nemesis Ranger Smith. Despite these big-name clients, Spumco has retained their nose-thumbing quality, and we thought our cover was the perfect spot for their rising animated star, Jimmy the Idiot Boy.

This whole issue, in fact, has a markedly rebellious feel. "Cheaters Do Prosper," by contributing editor Steve Knopper, examines the growing business of online academic cheating in the form of virtual term-paper banks.

Contributor Richard Greenfield researched some shady topics such as porn, drugs and weapons for his story "Contrabandwidth," an exposé showing that "in the global economy, even in cyberspace, one country's commerce is another country's contraband." We sent contributing editor Richard Thieme on a quest to separate the real hackers from the pretenders in his piece, "Zen and the Art of Hacking." Thieme talked to a variety of practitioners of the art of hacking and confesses that hackers in general are not like "the malevolent caricature invented by the media." Rather, Theime says, hackers represent "humanity at its best." Contributor Charles Platt rounds out the mix with a cynical (but ultimately winsome) look ahead to the future of the Net...and the futility of planning the future of the Net, in "Future Schlock."

And, oh yeah, we made this new games page that we're really proud of. It's a lot like *Highlights for Children,* but it's called the *IU*'s Kids' Korner, and we humbly present it for your approval. After all that heavy stuff, we figured you deserve a nice, honest maze and crossword puzzle. Don't thank us. Just go on and play.

.....hyperlink

mail

e-mail: mailguy@mcs.com

illustration by Jason Statts — thinearth@aol.com

Quid Pro Quo Compliments

In my view, *Internet Underground* is the best Internet magazine around. In light of that view, we were honored that your magazine reviewed our Thailand New Age Alternative Health Care Web site (**www.samart.co.th/hps**) in *IU* #14 ("WebGuide") and awarded us four stars.

We are truly amazed at the no-thrills, down-to-earth, realistic review you wrote. Your review was incredibly honest and straightforward. We have been honored by many reviews recently, including Microsoft's Best of the Web award, but truly, yours is the most precious to us.

Thanks once again *Internet Underground* magazine. We will reach for the sky in the coming months and make more positive adjustments to the site, in light of your constructive comments, so that your readers will continue to find visiting our site an even more enjoyable and valuable interactive learning experience for them.

Love and Light,
Josh Cravitt
Ko-Samui Island, Thailand
hps@samart.co.th

Letter of the Month

Hello, I am new and I would like e-mail friends. Please write to me.

Thanks,
Vic Travolta
dgta@mudspring.uplb.edu.ph

Tiny says: No offense, Vic, but friendship is a two-way street, and based on your initial correspondence, I don't see that you have much to offer. I'm not saying I don't need friends too. Hell, I'm as lonely as the next guy ever since my fish died, but still, I don't just randomly e-mail magazines looking for pals. I find friends the old-fashioned way, at the corner bar. Some of my best friends I met over a good game of billiards and a cold Pabst. I'm talking real friends here, guys that would be willing to take a bullet for you.

Our Third Foreign Letter in a Row!

I'm reading your magazine for the first time, and I realize that seemingly it is aimed at a young target, but in fact this is not true, because distinction, irony and talent have a wide audience everywhere, with no age barrier.

I'm over 40, but inside forever young and curious. The articles in *IU* are so fun and there is a great distance from the ordinary style of many Internet magazines. Your magazine has an innovative, fresh style. I want to compliment the wonderful staff for the beautiful and artistic layouts and for the whole publishing plan—well synthesized in the sentence: "laughing at ourselves is a call for improvement and a prayer for the future" ("Hyperlink," *IU* #13) The prayer of a new fan/reader is: keep it clever, creative and independent.

Ciao, a presto,
Alfredo Mazzacurati
Bologna, Italy
lig6376@iperbole.bologna.it

P.S. Tiny's reply to Jack Foster letter in *IU* #13 was great; it reminded me of Woody Allen's style.

Tiny says: Alfredo, thanks for the letter and thank you personally for the compliment. It's about time someone noticed all the good work I do around here. I have to admit that I was not familiar with Woody Allen's style so I went to the local video store to rent one of his movies after I got your letter. Let me tell you Alfredo, he is one funny fellow. Usually I don't go for that East Coast intellectual stuff, but this Allen guy does some funny schtick. I'm still not entirely comfortable with that whole ordeal between him and his half/step/adopted daughter, but I couldn't stop laughing during that* Hannah and Her Sisters. *No more Van Damme movies for me, I'm going back to rent* Manhattan *tonight.

MoRe aRTiCLeS ABoUt HaCKErZ, pIEEz

Hey TiNy,
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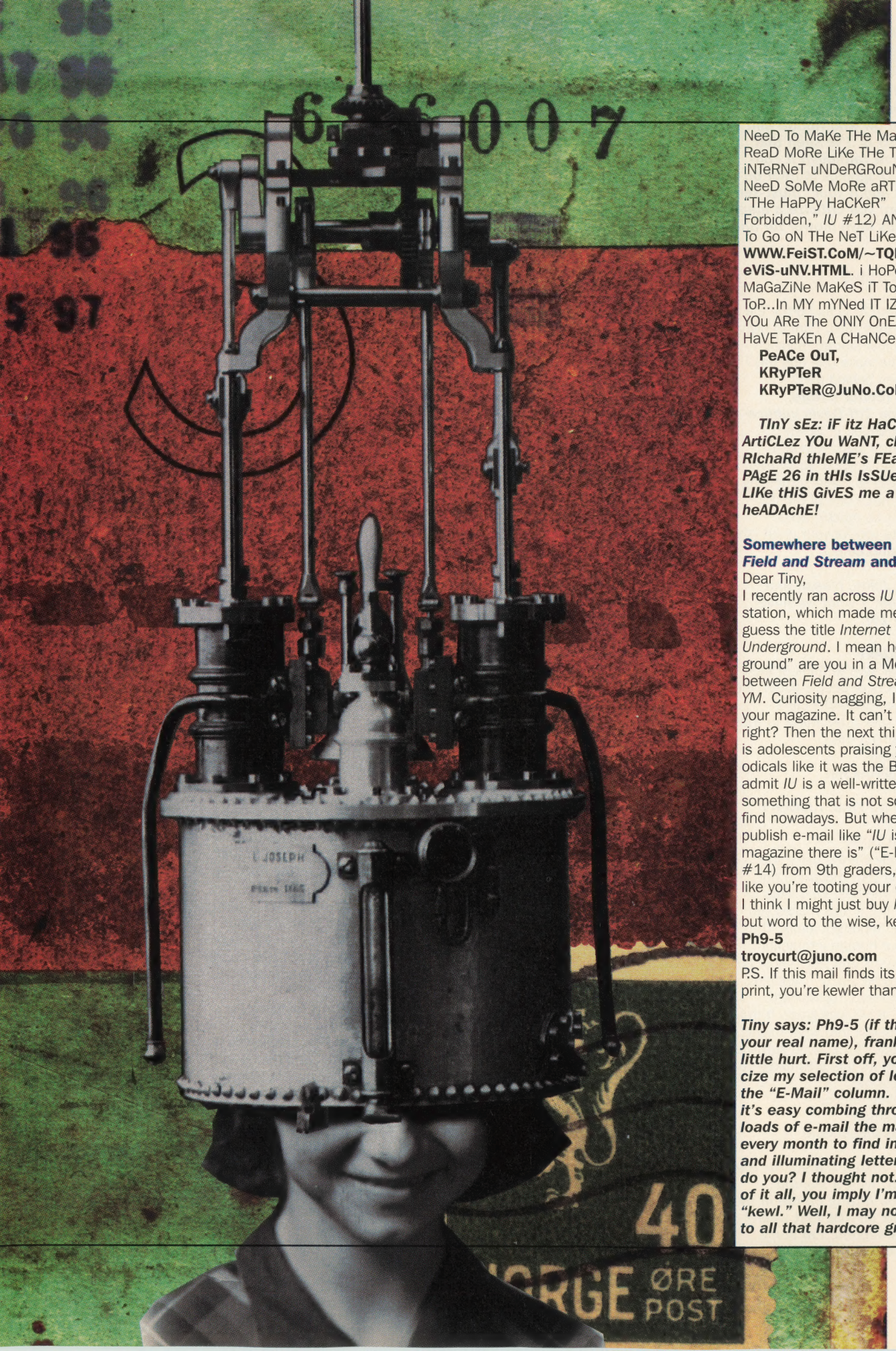
snail: Tiny, the Mailguy *Internet Underground*
1920 Highland Ave. #222 Lombard, IL 60148



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Somewhere between *Field and Stream* and *YM*

Dear Tiny,

I recently ran across *IU* in a Mobil station, which made me second guess the title *Internet Underground*. I mean how "underground" are you in a Mobil station between *Field and Stream* and *YM*. Curiosity nagging, I bought your magazine. It can't get worse, right? Then the next thing I read is adolescents praising your periodicals like it was the Bible. I admit *IU* is a well-written mag, something that is not so easy to find nowadays. But when you publish e-mail like "*IU* is the best magazine there is" ("E-Mail," *IU* #14) from 9th graders, it looks like you're tooting your own horn. I think I might just buy *IU* again, but word to the wise, keep it real.

Ph9-5
troycurt@juno.com

P.S. If this mail finds its way to print, you're kewler than I thought.

Tiny says: Ph9-5 (if that's even your real name), frankly, I'm a little hurt. First off, you criticize my selection of letters for the "E-Mail" column. You think it's easy combing through the loads of e-mail the mag gets every month to find insightful and illuminating letters? Well, do you? I thought not. On top of it all, you imply I'm not that "kewl." Well, I may not listen to all that hardcore grunge

music and I may not wear big baggy pants, but I'm still pretty "kewl." I know who Hootie and the Blowfish is. I've seen that* Friends *show (although it conflicts with* Diagnosis Murder *on CBS—talk about your "must-see TV"). Before you criticize a man, try using his lawn mower for an hour.

Special for Ph9-5

Hey Tiny,
In my opinion, *IU* is da bomb, the best mag I ever read. I am in high school and just started reading your mag, because one odd day I saw it hidden behind a *PC Computing* ***(Editor's Note: another fine Ziff-Davis publication)*** so I grabbed it! When I looked inside I said, "Whoa! I never thought anyone would ever have the balls to make something like this," (that's one of the reasons I like it so much). So, I congratulate you for your great job!
n_juice@juno.com

Tiny says: Juice, please just don't tell Mr. T what we have (see page 15).

Adios AMIGAs?

Did you ever stop to think of the large numbers of people surfin' the Net on their AMIGAs? I can't remember seeing an article in your mag concerning this.
Fred Redman
fredman1@rust.net

Tiny says: No Fred, I haven't.

Makes You Think

I just recently started using the Internet and your magazine not only shows the best Web sites to check out, but it also makes you think about important ideas. The article about human interaction with computers and whether or not we will become digital ("Mapping the Human Heart" by Richard Thieme, *IU* #14) was great. It truly does give insight into what might come to pass, if the world survives long enough for this technology to become possible.
Thank you very much,
Jason Rossman
XXFOXY40XX@aol.com

Tiny says: Jason, thanks for the letter...hey, wait a second! Weren't you hitting on me in the Flirt's Nook on AOL last week? No, wait a second, I'm sorry, that was XXSEXY40XX. Honest mistake.

Teleportation Explained

I've always enjoyed reading *IU*. I always find interesting articles in it, but I've noticed that sometimes your writers get carried away. I was reading "Mapping the Human Heart" by Richard Thieme (*IU* #14) and I came across the following statement: "Teleportation? Two years ago, an international group of six scientists confirmed that perfect teleportation is possible—but only if the original is destroyed."

Where did this happen? Who were the six international scientists? He then claims teleportation is now *only* an "engineering problem!" Could he be more explicit? What did the six scientists say anyway? Teleporting what? A pile of coal? Bottles? Mice? Human beings? Funding efforts of the world should focus on this engineering problem—what these six international scientists confirmed should be publicized more! (I smell Nobel prize here...)

I realize that this goes beyond the scope of his article, but as a responsible writer, he should have given references at the end of it. Perhaps he could write another article for *IU* discussing in detail what the six international scientists said two years ago about teleportation. I'm looking forward to reading it (and I mean it!).
Sincerely,
Yuris Fuentes
yuris@luther.che.wisc.edu

Tiny says: We were going to have Richard write a follow-up article, but then we realized we could probably get him to just respond to your letter for free.

Richard Thieme says*: I have received several inquiries about that reference—the mere possibility is fascinating and it was on the level of possibility that I was speaking.*

Teleportation is thinkable, in other words, as a possibility (rather than merely imaginable as a fictional reality) and that is the first step in what may be a long, long road to realization or a shortcut to nowhere.

The paper is entitled "Teleporting an Unknown Quantum State via Dual Classical and Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen Channels." The six authors are Charles H. Bennett, Gilles Brassard, Claude Crepeau, Richard Jozsa, Ashes Peres and William K. Wootters.

The paper was published in

Phys. Rev. Lett. 70, 1895 (March 29,1993)

You can download the paper from: ***vesta.physics.ucla.edu/~smolin/papers/teleportation.html.***

At the site, there are comments—eight pages worth—plus two figures (all in postscript). The Web page also refers you back to: ***vesta.physics.ucla.edu/~smolin****, which is "The Quantum Information Page," with links to interesting information about quantum cryptography, quantum computing and other inquiries into quantum information on the WWW, including another "fun" paper on teleportation.*

Here is a précis of the paper: "An unknown quantum state $|\phi\rangle$can be disassembled into, then later reconstructed from, purely classical information and purely nonclassical EPR correlations. To do so the sender, 'Alice,' and the receiver, 'Bob,' must prearrange the sharing of an EPR-correlated pair of particles. Alice makes a joint measurement on her EPR particle and the unknown quantum system, and sends Bob the classical result of this measurement. Knowing this, Bob can convert the state of his EPR particle into an exact replica of the unknown state $|\phi\rangle$ which Alice destroyed."

Yuris treats the statement as if it is absurd. The statement is not absurd, but speculative, and does not attempt to address issues of mice, bottles, etc. That is the "engineering problem" to which I refer and is a long way down the line. What is important is that teleportation has moved from a domain of inquiry that was fantastic and speculative, i.e., science fiction and fantasy, into a domain of inquiry (quantum physics) in which it is possible to describe teleportation in a way that is consistent with other descriptions of reality at that level of discourse and in that symbolic language. That symbolic structure (quantum physics) is what we currently must use to build our way into the next century. My point is simply that this paper shifts the contextual framework of the inquiry from, "Is it possible to describe this action in a way that is consistent with the way we describe other actions?" to "Now that we can describe this action in that way, what else can we say about it?"

Those questions will lead toward other questions, such as, "If we can SAY this and that about reality, is it possible to create the means by which to manifest it, that is, bring it forth? If so, what are those means?" This is analogous to my metaphorical statement in the "Life on Mars" piece in IU #15 that "Columbus was a mapmaker before he was an explorer," i.e., the conceptual framework must be generated either as a paradigm-shifting breakthrough or as part of an organic evolution of our thinking or both before we can believe we can actually go there and then in fact go there.

Space travel is the obvious analogy. We all know that the Royal Astronomer in Great Britain said that "space travel was utter bilge" shortly before Sputnik was launched. There was a point at which questions of possibility became questions of engineering, i.e., practical application. This is similar to the process by which many other contextual shifts in our thinking have taken place, i.e., heavier-than-air flight, tectonic plate theory, belief in the reality of meteorites, etc., etc.

There are descriptions in the literature of many realities that we laypeople would call fantastic. I have read about antigravity in physics journals, for example, and discussed the papers with engineers interested in real vehicular applications. There has been significant research—much of it black budget—into propulsion systems utilizing "antigravity" and beyond that would make my little reference to that teleportation paper sound like beer-drinking, sun-drenched consensus reality in the bleachers at a Chicago Cubs game.

There are more things in heaven and black budgets, Yuris, than are dreamt of in our philosophies.

Huh?

I have read with interest your magazine and have wondered how I can get access to the Internet since my computer is not connected to it.

Simelane S.
110500@uniswa.sz
The University of Swaziland

Tiny says: Simelane, the best way to get connected to the Internet is to use either a content provider or ISP. Since you're in Swaziland, you may want to try to connect through your university...hey, wait a second! How did you send me e-mail if you're not connected to the Net? Oh, I give up. Why don't you try e-mailing ol' Vic Travolta next time?

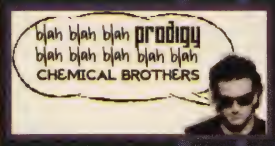
N E

#1 Guerrilla Girls www.voyagerco.com/gg/

The Guerrilla Girls describe themselves as "the conscience of the art world." Made simultaneously formidable and anonymous by their furry gorilla masks, these bold women crusade against sexism and racism prevalent in the art world. The Girls are perhaps most famous for their thought-provoking posters, which highlight questions and answers such as "Q: If February is Black History Month and March is Women's History Month, what happens the rest of the year? A: *Discrimination*," and "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? Less than 5% of the *artists* in the Modern Art Sections are female, but 85% of the *nudes* are female." The fact that the site lets you view posters from years past and talk back to the faceless group fundamentally changes the Guerrilla Girls experience—from transient to permanent, from anonymous to accountable. It's just what the movement needed.

#2 Smug www.smug.com

Smug is sarcastic. Oh yes, it's smug and priggish, too, but wonderfully sarcastic. The new e-zine places a magnifying glass over mainstream media, newspapers, musicians and filmmakers, and burns 'em. There were 19 different column sections when we last looked, with content ranging from horror stories about modern love to decompositions of pop songs like No Doubt's "I'm Just a Girl." Be sure to check out the column, "Target Audience," a monthly essay that ponders, with hysterical results, "Who are those ad guys talking to?" The e-zine sometimes degrades into condescension, but is always wonderfully smug.



#3 The Astounding B Monster www.bmonster.com

Filmgoers who like to cruise the oft-neglected B-movie shelves at the local ma-and-pa rental shack will get a thrill from reading what's probably the best online "offbeat film authority." The authors of the site are unabashed bad cinema fans, and give proper respect, and often disrespect to cult, sci-fi and horror films like *Reform School Girls* (1958) and *Beast With 1,000,000 Eyes* (1956). Rather than rate the schlocky films purely on their acting and directorial merits (what would be the point,anyway? They're B films, for crying out loud), the site's reviewers provide grades for "Atmosphere" and "Fun." Overlooked and discounted for years, this neglected genre has finally been vindicated.

#4 The Straight Dope www.straightdope.com

What are the real lyrics to "Louie Louie"? When they execute a guy by lethal injection, do they swab off his arm first? These are the kinds of questions answered by intrepid investigator Cecil Adams in his syndicated column "The Straight Dope." If you can't get your weekly fix of "The Straight Dope" from your local alternative newspaper, experience it on the Web at this official site, which archives the columns a mere three days after they come out in print. The site lets you read "the most recent 52 weeks" of the column, with a caveat: "Before you start penning missives complaining that there is only a year of columns available and that 'information wants to be free,' please remember that this information actually wants to one day be bundled up and sold for $9.95 at a store near you." E-mail your own factual question for a crack at an informative, though possibly insulting, response ("If ignorance were corn flakes, you'd be General Mills"). No question's too bizarre, Cecil says, so if you've been up nights wondering what the "H" in "Jesus H. Christ" stands for, this site may be your ticket to a sound sleep.

#5 History Channel www.historychannel.com

Even if it hasn't caught on with your cable carrier, The History Channel has made it to the Web with a surprisingly (for a TV channel!) enlightening site. Visit a virtual Ellis Island, or shop for authentic historical documents—including a first edition of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. At a Shockwave game called Tomb of the Pharaoh, you can learn the disgusting details of Egyptian embalming methods (we found out how a "brain hook" was used). And don't miss This Day in History, which gives a rundown of notable world events on any day of the year you choose: March 1, it turns out, is the day FM radio was first broadcast (1941). And on that day in 1937, U.S. Steel raised workers' wages to $5 a day: "That's right. About 40 cents an hour. Now, punch that time clock and quit your complaining."

Top Ten

#6 Roadside America www.roadsideamerica.com

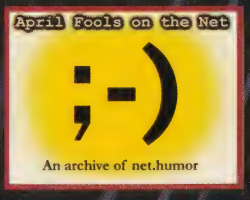
There are two types of road-trippers: those who obliviously speed down the interstate racing to their destination, and those who take the time to exit the highway and see the balls of twine and houses of mud that dot the back roads of America. This site is for the latter. An extension of the popular book by the same name, this massive site is a must-visit before setting out on even the shortest of car journeys—there might even be an attraction in your vicinity (we found a funeral home near our office that doubles as a miniature golf course).

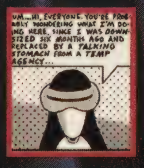
#7 Theatre Central www.theatre-central.com

Stagestruck surfers everywhere should find Theatre Central to be a singularly sensational site. With 20 links for Shakespeare Festivals alone, it may well live up to its claim to have "the largest compendium of theatre links on the Internet." Beyond the staggering (and well-organized) list of resources, though, Theatre Central has plenty of content of its own, with articles like "Relaxation: The Key to Emotional and Physical Strength" and "*The Crucible* (For Less Than $2,000)." When we visited, a virtual Call Board was in the works for aspiring actors who want to browse help-wanted ads and casting calls online. We're psyched—we've already started growing out our locks in anticipation of another *Hair* revival.

#8 April Fools' On the Net www.2meta.com/april-fools/

Perhaps the only group more prevalent on the Net than pornographers are pranksters. Forever finding new and creative ways to disturb and upset the balance of things, these mischievous individuals have found special pleasure in posting phony messages to Usenet. Collecting some of the best in April Fools' tomfoolery, April Fools' on the Net provides the Top 20 dupes of all time, and a timeline of online pranks reaching as far back as 1984. Some of the most amusing postings: "Microsoft Bids to Acquire Catholic Church," "Creators Admit Unix a Hoax," "Microsoft Windows for the Macintosh," and "McDonalds and EUnet join to offer Global 'Internet in a Lunchbox.'" Often funnier than the postings themselves, be sure to read the responses by the many fools who were actually suckered by the pranks.





#9 This Modern World www.well.com/user/tomorrow/

Not much flash here, but if you're a fan of the cartoonist/political satirist Tom Tomorrow (a.k.a. Dan Perkins), you'll love the archive of his weekly comics that make up the bulk of the site. If you're not a fan, you soon will be after reading a couple of installments of "This Modern World," where Tomorrow, with the help of Sparky, the funniest cartoon penguin since Chilly Willy, skewers figures from both the left and right—and even those in the great in-between.

#10 Cars @Cost www.carscost.com

Finally, an Internet service that takes the guesswork, haggling and insecurity out of buying a new car. Cars @Cost's auto-buying network saves you money and hassles—not only do they provide information on factory invoice prices and find you amazing deals, but they also arrange for all of the details of selecting and obtaining the car. Don't sweat, shake and stammer your way through this massive purchase any longer; let Cars @Cost do the negotiating for you.

Numbers on the Net

The stereotypical Net-user is lazy, fat and horny, but not so, according to our ground-breaking research. We plugged the seven deadly sins into HotBot, and the results show that netizens are predominantly irate and conceited.

Pride 223,636
Covetousness 4,501
Gluttony 3,769
Anger 142,436
Sloth 11,034
Lust 71,592
Envy 42,706

Marc Down

It's hard to really pity Netscape's Marc Andreessen. After all, not many of us have appeared on the cover of *Time* and had $50 million in stock by the time we were 25. Still, after a recent string of events, we can't help but feel a little sympathy for the guy.

First came a feature in the January issue of *GQ* by Alan Deutschman that exposed the supposed *wunderkind* as a huge fraud who had invented the events of his mythological rise to prominence and now had become a prisoner trapped by the lies the media had eagerly lapped up like a thirsty dog. Next, there was the February issue of a prominent national computer magazine that put his name on their cover—misspelled "Andreesson." Still, since most people buy *GQ* for the fancy fash-

ions, and since most people can't spell Anderson, much less Andreessen, the real sting came with the release of the Feb. 10 issue of *Business Week*. The cover story, "Netscape: How it plans to outrun Microsoft," mentions Andreessen only in passing, reinforcing Deutschman's claim that Andreessen is little more than a figurehead at Netscape. But it's the photo of Andreessen that's the lowest blow of all (see above), which shows that Andreessen's not spending his millions on exercise equipment.

Bargain Bin

Chiariffic Catalog
www.chiapet.com/chiariff.htm

The Chiariffic catalog is your one-stop shop for all your Chia needs. Not only can you purchase Chia Pets and Chia Heads, but there's a whole selection of Chia wear including T-shirts, sweat shirts, baseball caps and watches. Our favorite is the simple white T-shirt emblazoned with the hallmark jingle "Ch-Ch-Ch-Chia" for only $12.95. Inexplicably, the Chia people also are responsible for the Clapper, so when you're buying a new Chia head, you can also pick up the new-and-improved Smart Clapper here (now turns on and off two lights or appliances). Order before midnight tonight. Shipping and handling are extra. Please, no C.O.D.s.

Net Nomenclature

Billionerd: Truncated term to describe any billionaire computer industry mogul.

Birth Link: Any link that, rather than just taking you to a new page, spawns a whole new browser window.

C.C. Rider: Term describing any person who is continually c.c.'d in an e-mail thread, yet never contributes.

Conceitcam: A Net vanity mirror that reflects the image of a person at his or her desk to the world's billions.

Cyberfill: Cyberspace's equivalent of a landfill, i.e., all of the thousands of pointless Web sites on the Net.

"Cyberfill" courtesy of Thomasvw@aol.com
Send your Net Nomenclature submissions to iu@mcs.com. If we use it, you'll win the *IU* Random Prize.

The Net's Lowest Common Denominator

It appears the much-aspersed pun has finally met its match. Behold, there is a lower form of humor! One step below fart and your-mama jokes, "Ate My Balls" pages now number in excess of 100 and are multiplying all over the Net like some noisome contagion.

What are Ate My Balls pages? They're the Net's most juvenile joke: Web sites that combine photo and movie stills of famous individuals, Photshopped with thought bubbles exclaiming the joy of eating the gonads of others.

Please excuse our forthrightness. There's really no other way to describe this odd phenomenon, which is best experienced firsthand. Yahoo! recognizes the wastes of bandwidth at the category "Top: Entertainment: Humor, Jokes, and Fun: Tasteless Humor: Ate My Balls."

The exercise in stupidity is worthy of mention, if only for its sheer popularity...and, of course, stupidity. Apparently, the craze was conceived by Nehal Patel, a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who posted the original Mr. T Ate My Balls Page at **www.cen.uiuc.edu/~nkpatel/mr.t/index.html**, a site that sports punchlines like, "I pity the fool who don't like balls!"

Patel says the page was an inside joke between him and some friends at school, and rejoices, "Who knew that it would become this big!"

Who, indeed? Convinced that they've stumbled upon the universe's most hysterical joke, other Ate My Balls authors have posted tributes to the Mr. T original, including such sites as Alf Ate My Balls, Shannon Miller Ate My Balls, Steve Case Ate My Balls, Aliens Ate My Balls (see photo left) Boba Fett Ate My Balls, and David Filo and Jerry Yang Categorically Indexed My Balls.

Most amusing is the Forrest Gump Ate My Balls Page, which goes so far as to thank Patel for inspiring his work.

Well, far be it from us to tell them what's funny. Heck, Ate My Balls inspired us to publish this story.

Netspeak

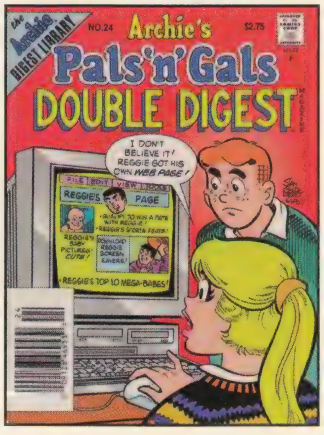
"I have bunions from all the running around."
—Kathy Lee Gifford confessing the painful truth about her foot problems on a very special AOL chat session. Quick Regis, call the podiatrist!

"As a member of MENSA, how do you keep in such terrific shape?"
—Ed Asner revealing the question he gets asked the least on AOL.

"The only thing that I know about my computer is what room it is in. I walk by it, I touch it, my children turn it on, my wife loves the Motley Crue, but I am completely illiterate when it comes to the computer."
—Henry Winkler discussing his technophobia and his wife's affection for heavy metal on AOL.

"I don't know. I didn't have anything to do with that movie."
—Christopher Guest responding to the whimsical query "How much of *My Dinner with Andre* was improvised?" by an anonymous AOL member.

Riverdale Gets Wired



It's official. The last morsel of American culture has been invaded by the Net. Archie and his pals, usually the last cartoon characters to pick up on a trend, have discovered the gold mine of humor that is the Internet. This cover (see left) is just a harbinger of what's surely to be years of boisterously entertaining strips featuring hilarious gags like Moose trying to put stamps on his e-mail or Betty and Veronica locking horns on who has the rights to the domain name **ilovearchie.com**...not to mention endless puns on the FTP and Gopher utilities that have long been known as "Archie" and "Veronica."

PERCENT OF USERS

WHO ACKNOWLEDGED A

"NEED TO ESTABLISH

RULES FOR NET USE":

93 PERCENT

PERCENT OF USERS WHO

COMPLAINED THAT

NETIZENS SHOW POOR

NETIQUETTE WHILE ONLINE:

55 PERCENT

PERCENT OF USERS WHO

SAY THEY USE PROPER

E-MAIL NETIQUETTE BY

ADDING CARRIAGE RETURNS

TO MESSAGES TO MAKE

THEM EASIER TO READ:

81 PERCENT

PERCENT OF USERS WHO

SAY THEY PROVIDE FALSE

INFORMATION WHEN

REGISTERING AT WEB SITES:

63 PERCENT

NET LINE

INTELLIGENCE REPORT: NEWS FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Send news information or comments to: RLB@MCS.NET

[What's In .store For .web]

Controversy Erupts Over the Naming of New Top-Level Domains

THERE WAS LITTLE LOVE THIS FEBRUARY between participants involved in the drafting process of a proposal for new generic top-level domain names (gTLDs). The International Ad Hoc committee, a group entrusted by the Internet Society and the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority to make recommendations for the new domains, released its final report on Feb. 4. The report essentially called for seven new gTLDs, .firm, .store, .web. .arts, .rec, .info. and .nom.

IAHC also called for the creation of 28 new international registrars, administrative entities who'll have shared authorization to "obtain, enter and modify a registry's data." Essentially, groups like Network Solutions Inc., which currently maintains a monopoly holding on the gTLDs .com, .net and .org, will dole out subordinate domains like ibm.firm, iu.web or rob.nom.

Naturally, everyone's kung fu fighting over the opportunity to become a registrar—NSI rakes in millions each year managing .com, .net and .org. However, IAHC's report not only limits the number of new registries to 28, but only allows for four applicants to be selected from each of seven global regions, as defined by the World Trade Organization. What this means in a nutshell: Only four North American applicants, four Western Europe applicants, four Australian applicants and so on will be allowed to become registrars. Within the United States alone, it's suspected that hundreds will apply to become registrars, with the lucky North American four to be determined by lottery.

"I don't see any technical reason to limit the number of top-level domain names," argues Richard Sexton, president of VRx Network Services Inc., in Canada and a frequent contributor to the online discussion at iahc-discuss@iahc.org, regarding new top-level domains. "Karl Denniger, who runs mcs.com, has tested a system loaded with 10,000 top-level domain names. So there's no technical reason not to do it. There's no social reason not to do it."

Some of the more active participants in the gTLD open discussion were less disturbed by the number of new domains, or the process of becoming a registrar, than with the actual choice in domain names. "They shouldn't have chosen .web. They're going to get their butts sued," says Eugene Kashpureff, president of AlterNIC, a private organization that supports gTLDs not approved of by the IANA. "Chris Ambler owns the rights to .web, and AlterNIC will recognize his right to it."

Debate also stormed and still rages over the choice to create the gTLDs .firm and .store. "They're utterly useless," says Sexton. "You know you're going to see tits.firm and cock.firm. I don't think this is what they had in mind. Whether that happens is kind of irrelevant because I just don't see IBM going after IBM.firm."

Other valid complaints about the proposal include disappointment with IAHC's decision not to offer free domain space to non-profit groups; the creation of vague governing bodies made up primarily of ISOC and IANA members; and the decision to arbitrate domain name disputes through a third party, the Administrative Domain Name Challenge Panel.

Aveek Datta, a Carnegie Mellon University computer science major who runs a free domain service at **www.ml.org**, is concerned about dangerous anti-competitive practices among registrars. What if an industry giant like Sprint were to run a domain-name service and give away free secondary domains to users who would, in exchange, promise to subscribe to Sprint's Net and phone services?

Not everyone is unhappy with the proposal, however; just as vocal as those who disapprove of the report are those who advocate it. Carl Oppedahl, a partner at the law firm Oppedahl & Larson, respected for his involvement with domain-name disputes, says in support of the committee, "Everything about the Internet is consensus-driven. The committee took on many very difficult and hotly contested issues, and made a good-faith effort to arrive at a workable consensus." Pleased with IAHC's decision to break up the monopoly on .com, .net and .org domains, and satisfied with IAHC's approach to domain-name disputes, which removes the registrar from the role of arbiter, Oppedahl believes the proposal will "enjoy the consensus of the Internet community."

Finally free of his duties, IAHC Chair and ISOC President Don Heath brushes off the many insults that have been hurled his way as a result of the report. "I think some of these complaints are founded. From a personal standpoint, I would have preferred .shop," says Heath, good-natured about the heated debate. "When we first published it, almost instantly, we got this rash of flames. It almost says that the people prepared their flames in waiting for the thing to come out. They didn't read it, they just flamed it. But by the end of the first day, I was feeling very positive about it. It's been broadly accepted...and now, the IAHC is done with it."

—Rob Bernstein

[FBI Raid on Cyberspace]

Think Of It As a Case Of *Dragnet* Meets The Internet

ON JAN. 28, AGENTS FOR THE FEDERAL Bureau of Investigation issued search warrants against operators of bulletin-board services, Internet Relay Chat channels and FTP sites in seven different states. The agents seized computers and records, but they did not make any arrests at the time.

The operation, code-named "Cyber Strike," appears to be the FBI's first major foray into cyberspace. Initiated by the bureau's International Computer Crime Squad, Cyber Strike involved eight months of investigation and close work with industry groups.

The FBI alleges that the network operators that were targeted were engaging in large-scale

software piracy, and that their sites were veritable warehouses for the free distribution and exchange of copyrighted commercial programs. The most egregious offenders stockpiled copies of popular software, often before their formal release on the market, the feds say.

Interestingly, the FBI and software industry officials admit that the pirates typically do not sell programs for profit, but rather they compete for "prestige and membership," by building the most expansive libraries. In some cases, new bulletin-board members allegedly must contribute commercial contraband before they can download software themselves.

Cyber Strike represents "the first time we have made a coordinated effort against pirate bulletin boards," says George Grotz, spokesman for the FBI's San Francisco office.

In fact, Cyber Strike appears to be part of a greater effort by the FBI to focus on high-tech crime and carve out a niche for themselves in changing times. Last year, the FBI's burgeoning high-tech posse directed two major operations against the epidemic of armed robbery of microprocessors and other high-cost hardware.

"The problem of software piracy was bad enough, but with piracy on the Internet, the problem can grow exponentially," says Kathy Tom, of San Rafael, Calif.-based Autodesk Inc., one of the world's largest software companies and makers of Autocad.

"It's so simple," Tom adds. "All it takes is a couple of clicks of the mouse. That's why the potential is so enormous."

The Software Publishers Association and the Business Software Alliance, the two trade group giants that helped the FBI in its investigation, estimate the 1995 loss in revenue from all types of software piracy at $13.1 billion.

They say that Internet-related crime is becoming an increasing part of the problem as the medium matures.

Previously, companies seeking to crack down on piracy had filed civil suits against the perpetrators, says Becky Ranninger, director of legal affairs for Symantec Corp. She says the threat of criminal enforcement should provide companies a powerful ally.

"If you were operating a pirate bulletin-board service and heard of all these people nationwide being served, wouldn't it make you think twice?" Ranninger asks.

—Matt Richtel

PERCENT OF DOMAIN NAMES IN

THE TOP-LEVEL DOMAIN .COM:

25 PERCENT

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NAMES, JUST AHEAD OF THE

FIFTH PLACE GERMAN DOMAIN

.DE, WHICH MAINTAINS

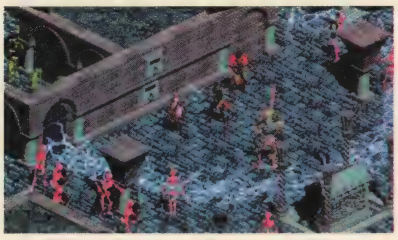
721,847 DOMAIN NAMES.

SOURCES: INTERACTIVE PR, MARK LOTTER AT NETWORK WIZARDS, NEWSPAGE, NEWSBYTES, NIKKEI ENGLISH NEWS, NIHON KEIZAI SHIMBUN'S NEIKKEI-NET

[Hotter Than Hell]

Blizzard Entertainment's Diablo is a Smokin' Multiplayer Environment

IT'S TIME FOR GAMERS ALL OVER THE WORLD TO get together and raise a little hell. Diablo, a new game released by Blizzard Entertainment, offers slick, addictive role-playing action, plus four ways for players to connect via modem, including Blizzard's free service Battle.Net (**battle.net**). Players can even install a "spawned" version of the game on a friend's machine, allowing for multi-player action even if only one copy of the game is owned.



As you might expect, the multiplayer game on Battle.Net is a bit choppy, making for some panicky moments when the mouse pointer just won't move fast enough to get

you out of harm's way. But the thrill of adventuring with a friend, or dueling to the death with a complete stranger, makes the experience well worth the slight lag.

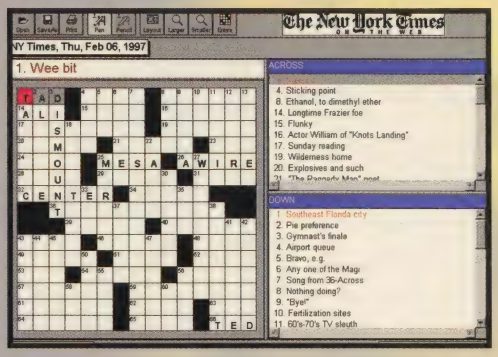
Up to four players can participate in a multiplayer game. Choose from three character types: The warrior relies on brute force, rogues are masters of the bow and sorcerers shape the surrounding Mana into powerful spells. But be careful—even a friendly player can harm you if you blunder into his or her line of fire.

For a full review of *Diablo* visit our Web site at **www.underground-online.com/online/reviews/**.

—Troy Brophy

The gravy train is over. One of the best-kept free secrets is no longer free, and it's a shame. I'm referring to *The New York Times* online crossword puzzle. Shortly after the *Times* made its splashy debut on the Web, the Old Gray Lady quietly introduced a Diversions section featuring an online version of its daily crossword puzzle. Surprisingly, the puzzle was free. I say surprisingly, because as good a paper as the *Times* is, the real draw for many readers is the puzzle (besides the coverage of Third World *coups*, that is). Alas, the puzzle is free no more; the *Times* recently started charging $9.95 annual subscriptions for complete access to the crossword puzzle section (for the price, you also get access to the bridge and chess columns, which is the equivalent of having access to hot and mild sauce after you buy a bean burrito at Taco Bell).

So, for $9.95, is it worth it? If you're as big a crossword fan as I am, the answer is yes. Averaged out



[Is It Worth It?]

THE *NEW YORK TIMES* CROSSWORD PUZZLE

www.nytimes.com/partners/xword/

over 365 days, the annual fee translates to only three cents a puzzle. Granted, the puzzles get tougher as the week progresses (Monday being the easiest, Saturday the hardest and Sunday being, well, *the* Sunday crossword puzzle), but even if you can only finish Monday through Wednesday, subscribing to the online puzzle is a bargain when you consider that the *Times* costs $1.00 a day outside of the New York metropolitan region.

Online, the puzzle is a quick download (less than a minute with a 28.8) and the *Times* provides Across Lite puzzle software (a great improvement over the site's original software, Lyric). Doing the puzzle online takes some getting used to, but once you get the basics of the program down, you may never pull out a pencil again. Purists, of course, can still print out the day's puzzle. And if, heaven forbid, you're too busy to do the puzzle one day, there's a whole archive of past puzzles for your downloading pleasure (print out a bunch before going on that next business trip).

One last note—if you're an AOL subscriber, the *Times'* puzzles will continue to be free. One more last note—if you're an AOL subscriber, it doesn't really matter because it's so hard to connect to AOL.

—Alex Gordon

[Smells Like Teen Spirit]

Profile: Andrew Saxe, Cybermall Mogul

MOST TEENS EARN THEIR SPENDING MONEY WORKING AT the local burger joint, and their concept of entrepreneurship does not usually grow beyond a modest baby-sitting business. But thanks to the Internet, Andrew Saxe, 16, of Mt. Vernon, Ill., has been able to launch his very own Internet mall (**cyber-store.com**) in his after-school hours.

How did he get started? Saxe, a junior in high school, says, "I've wanted to start a business for a long time. I've pretty much always been interested in it. Then I started reading about the Internet, and we got Internet access in our house. Then I looked around and found out that it could be done pretty easily and fairly inexpensively. I found the suppliers and set it up." He got his start-up capital through—what else?—a few summers of lawn-mowing.

The mall, which boasts over 600 products, from jewelry to cologne to batteries, looks clean and professional, and offers competitive prices. Saxe does not inventory the items himself, but maintains contacts with many vendors and sells their wares through his unified storefront on the Net. When an order comes in, the credit-card number is processed through a secure server. (Saxe's parents co-signed the agreements with the credit-card companies.) Saxe's involvement is to entice a buy, then to make sure that the merchandise gets delivered to the customer. His emphasis is on customer service, and he'll go to any length to keep a customer happy. His ethics recently inspired him to donate 5 percent of Cyber Store's profits to charity.

What do Saxe's friends think of this venture? "Oh, they think it's neat," he says. "They always want to know how much money I'm making. That's the first thing they ask." Saxe declines to disclose figures, but says that the business is profitable. More importantly, he's in it for the experience. "My goal, for a long time, has been to someday be a CEO," he says. "And I guess I'm already somewhat of a CEO."

One challenge that comes with the territory is the expense of marketing a site. Saxe finds banner ads expensive, and tries to promote his mall through posts to newsgroups and mailing lists. However, Saxe reports that the benefits far outweigh any trials he goes through to run the mall. What are the high points? "I think it's really neat when I get orders from other countries. Like today, I got an order from Brussels," he says, his voice full of honest pleasure. "And of course, I always like it when people write to say that they like the site!"

IU decided to ask a definitive question in order to find out if Saxe is really a teen-ager, and not just a modest, over-achieving impostor from another planet. *Andrew, is your bedroom a mess?* Saxe laughs a little, and answers, "Well yes, it is. But it's only because I let my dad share it as an office." The jury's still out on this one...

—Sarah Ellerman

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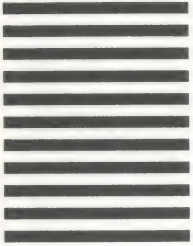

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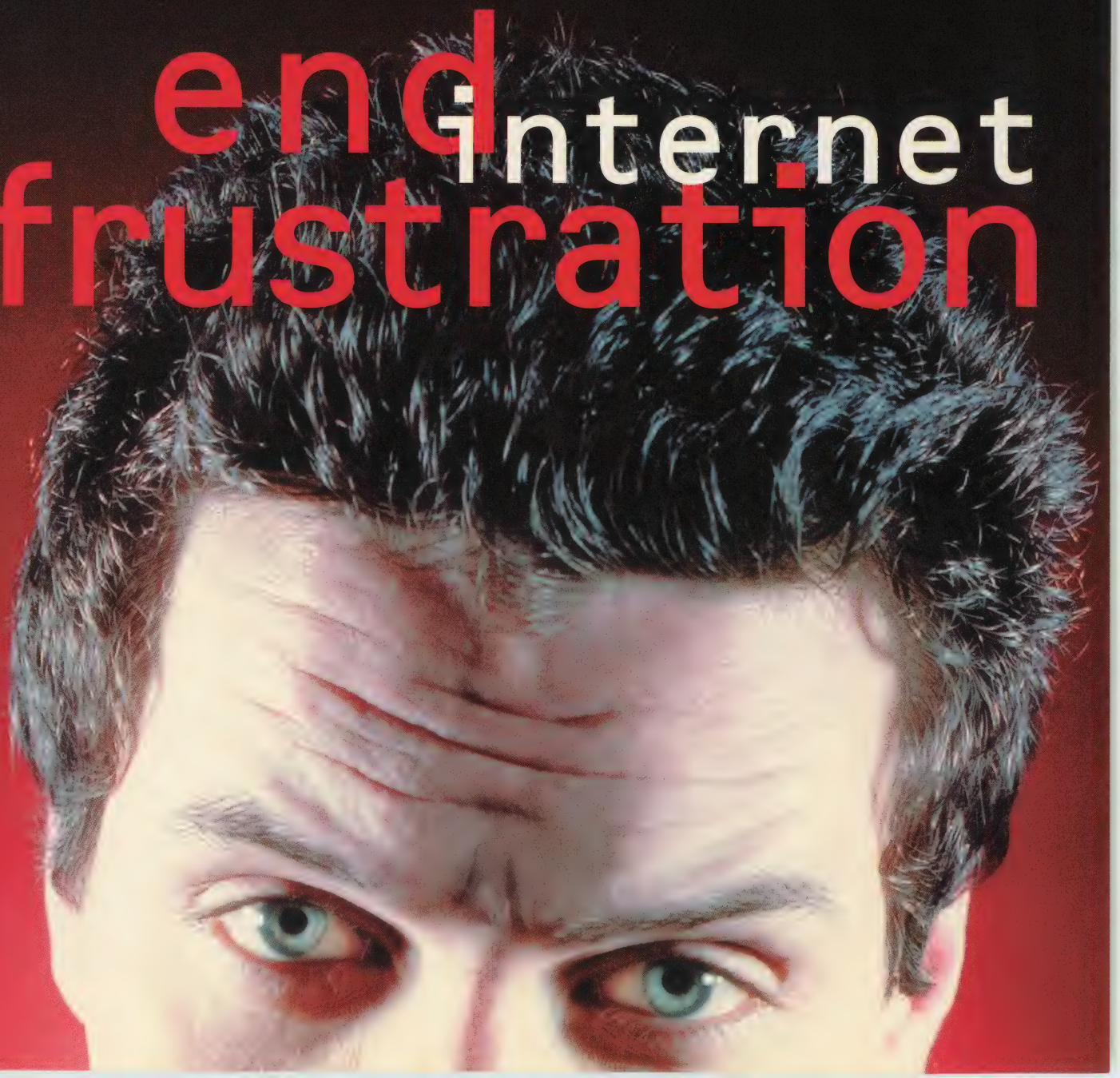

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Net Boycotts

With hundreds of sites advocating the boycotting of everything from Microsoft to tourism in Burma to Van Halen, it's clear that consumer activists have come of age in the online world. Outspoken criticism on the Net is difficult to squelch, and most attempts by corporations to silence opposition, justifiably or not, only result in the creation of mirrored sites with more heated discussion. But are boycotts launched online successful? Yes, according to meta@harlequin.com, who led a campaign against Open Text, an Internet search engine company, planning to bump pages, for a fee, to the top of searches. Concerned that this process, also referred to as "preferred listing," would set a dangerous precedent favoring big business and hurt the egalitarian flow of data to end users, meta@harlequin.com set up a boycott page at **freethought.tamu.edu/~meta/rs/ot/**. Open Text has since stopped their preferred listing practices; however, meta@harlequin.com is tentative to take much credit. "Whether or not boycotts work is debatable...but the Internet certainly makes it a lot easier to organize," he says. Check out the Miscellaneous Boycott links at **seattlecafe.com/boycott/links.htm** to begin your own boycotting efforts.

[Net Briefs]

Billboard Balderdash

Laughably billing itself as the "nation's largest chain of local Internet newspapers," the get-rich-quick shysters at **www.internet-income.com** are attempting to lease Web billboards to users. When we last checked our so-called local Chicago edition, it was more or less devoid of any news about anything. Promoting a 100.8 percent return on investments, this latest mockery of legitimate efforts to improve Net commerce even insists, "You MUST call...within the next 48 hours to reserve a location." As if this shady deal might end in a two-day period.

Razing the Raters

Harboring contempt for the Internet rating system devised by the Recreational Software Advisory Council (RSACi), the hysterically sarcastic wiseacres at **www.peacefire.org/RSucky/index2.shtml** have created a new rating system entitled RSucky. The new standard claims to be able to "screen out hacker-related material ranging from 'downloadable software' to 'advocating Linux,' as well as sexually related content such as 'passionate teen poetry' and 'wanton use of red and pink backgrounds.'"

[Trial By Net Jury]

Death-Row Inmates Use the Internet to Plead for Clemency

"ON 7 OCTOBER 1996, THE SUPREME COURT REJECTED HIS final appeal. Now you are his last hope."

That's the plea that greets visitors to "Will Illinois Execute an Innocent Man?" (**www.wenoch.com**), a site exploring the case of Willie Enoch, who was convicted of murder in 1983. One of a number of "death-row" sites proclaiming a convict's innocence, Willie Enoch's pages carry a particularly urgent message: Denied further appeal, Enoch's life now depends on clemency from Gov. Jim Edgar. The site aims to further public awareness of the case, and to provoke a response from citizens which might convince Edgar to grant clemency.

Andrew Brenner, one of the attorneys on Enoch's defense team, put together the site on server space donated from Tezcat, a Chicago service provider. "Willie stands to be executed on a mere technicality," he says. "You hear people say someone got off on a technicality, but Willie could be executed because the lawyer in his first trial failed to file a post-trial motion for appeal." The site explains that Enoch was never able to get a full appeal because of that failure—"a higher court has never reviewed key errors made at Enoch's trial."

If part of the value of the Internet is to empower individuals to put out their own messages, it's not surprising that many death-row inmates have found their way to the Web. A history of Enoch's trial,

laid out at the site in stark white-on-black, explains that the jury that convicted him didn't know that "the only physical evidence found near the crime scene, a knife and a blood-stained shirt, did not belong to Enoch." Given the absence of physical evidence linking Enoch to the crime scene and the apparent and (in the case of the post-trial motion) *admitted* screw-ups of his first lawyer, this history has had a powerful effect on site visitors. Hundreds of netizens have used a form at the site to e-mail Edgar on Enoch's behalf.

To make the argument even more compelling, Brenner has used the Web to put up audio files of Enoch reading from a personal statement he wrote, and has set up a form for visitors to "Ask Willie a Question." Questions are forwarded to attorney Sheri Engleken, then printed and sent to Enoch, who writes responses on the printouts and sends them back. "I put them up without editing," says Brenner, who wants site visitors to understand that Enoch, despite "not having had a lot of breaks," is an intelligent, articulate person who's doing a good job coping with a terrible situation.

Enoch's lawyers are hoping that DNA testing can now be done on evidence collected in 1983, and are keeping Web technology in mind as they continue to make the case for Enoch's innocence. When a couple of them drove down to Peoria, Ill., to look at evidence still held at the police department there, says Brenner, "We not only brought traditional cameras, but a digital camera." One piece of evidence in Peoria is the pair of pants Enoch was wearing on the night the murder took place. "The prosecutor put on a witness who said [Enoch] had burned the pants, to destroy evidence." But according

to Brenner, Michael Rose, Enoch's public defender at the trial, never pointed out to the jury that that witness was clearly lying.

For something as complex as a murder trial, the Web is perhaps the ideal medium for making a persuasive argument. The case can be retold and documented in detail, and made personal through the inclusion of the prisoner's own words: "Am I scared of being executed? Sure I am scared of being murdered for a crime I didn't commit." The American Bar Association recently advocated a moratorium on executions in the United States until jurisdictions can "ensure that death penalty cases are administered fairly, impartially and in accordance with due process," so it may not be surprising that many death-row inmates have stories of injustice to tell.

At another site, "Innocent on Death Row" (**www.gbiz.com/odell/**), inmate Joseph O'Dell writes: "It has been proven that there are innocent people on death row. Many have died because of ignorance, abuse of power and just plain corruption. This fact does not ease the mental anguish I feel knowing that the state is trying so hard to kill me, despite strong evidence of my innocence. The lawyers and experts from around the country tell me that it's not about truth and justice, it's about power now. The state cannot afford to admit they made a mistake or it would open the doors for other cases. But those that hold the ultimate power, the people, have shown their support for me through the Internet. Those in governmental power listen to the people, if only to get re-elected."

Some convicts on death row, like Mumia Abu-Jamal, have widespread support and media attention, but for those who don't, the Web is an accessible way to generate some awareness and perhaps sympathy. At the very least, it lets convicts contact some of those in "ultimate power" directly—their fellow citizens—as they seek to save their lives.

—Gloria Mitchell

Convicts and Their Cases

Alan J. Bannister (**users.aol.com/clamb80753/bann/bann.html**): Admits he killed another man during a struggle in 1983; says he rejected a plea bargain that would have sentenced him to life in prison because he felt "he was not guilty of a first-degree offense."

Willie Enoch (**www.wenoch.com**): Maintains his innocence for the murder of an Illinois woman; believes Derek Proctor, the victim's boyfriend and a key witness for the prosecution, actually committed the crime.

Carzell Moore (**www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/3366/**): Sentenced to death in 1977 for the kidnap, rape and murder of a Georgia store clerk; says he was brought to trial as "the trigger man" only because his co-defendant had escaped from jail.

Joseph O'Dell (**www.gbiz.com/odell/**): Claims DNA evidence rules him out as the perpetrator of the 1985 rape and murder of a Virginia woman. His supporters, according to this site, include Pope John Paul II and Sister Helen Prejean (author of *Dead Man Walking*).

HateSpeech.com

While we've reported *ad nauseam* about individuals and corporations locking horns over domain names, a new type of domain name dispute recently reared its ugly head. In question is what to do about potentially offensive domain names. Controversy erupted in late January after Benjamin Phelps put up a Web site with an anti-homosexual agenda at www.godhatesfags.com. At press time, the site had already been kicked off two hosts, Santa Clara, Calif.-based NetGate Communications and Pittsburgh-based Pair Networks—but Phelps, who belongs to the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan., an infamous anti-gay religious group, still owned the name and was looking for yet another server to host his site. InterNIC, the organization that oversees domain-name registrations, does not allow names to be registered that contain any of the infamous seven dirty words banned by the FCC, but has no policy against names that contain ethnic slurs or hate speech.

Honey, Who Do We Know in Moldova?

In one of the more diabolical Net scams we've seen, hundreds of horny netizens unwittingly racked up enormous phone bills after visiting several supposedly free porn sites. The scam worked like this: visitors to certain pornographic sites were instructed to download a free picture viewer before they could access archives of X-rated photos. Once the application was downloaded and launched, the program would furtively disconnect the modem, mute the volume of the modem and speakers, and reconnect the modem to a distant server in the Republic of Moldova which in turn would route the call to a server in Scardborough, Ontario. It gets worse. Users had no idea they had been reconnected, so even after they stopped viewing the dirty pictures, if they continued to surf the Web, it was via the Moldovian connection. Canadian police officials said one victim alone amassed $6,000 in phone charges to Moldova. For the record, a one-minute call to Moldova using AT&T costs between $2.12 and $2.93, depending on the time of day.

Saturday Net Fever

If you can stand the interminable download and the sputtering Castanet technology, Disco-Rama offers an amusing '70s retrospective online at **www.entertainment.com**. Not great stuff, but worth a look, if only for the Village People Who's Who page.

THE TOKYO SHOCK BOYS

www.shockboys.com

The oh-so-zany Tokyo Shock Boys claim to be Japan's best known comedy export—a sad indication of the comedy scene in Japan. Justifying the "shock," in Shock Boys, the wacky troupe of crazed samurai perform acts of daring that include: dragging heavy objects across a stage by the testicles, swallowing live scorpions, lighting fireworks from the tuchis and drinking milk and squeezing it out through the eyes. In the amusing "Our Story" section of the site, visitors are informed that the Shock Boys even run a class of "Young Shock Boys and Girls" in Japan. The finer pupils apparently win opportunities to strut their stuff on stage with their heroes. We're interested in seeing the young woman who can "eat a watermelon and spit the pits out through her nose," drink a pint of beer through her proboscis in under 30 seconds and "nose bleed on request."

CROSS SKULL

www.sbermprod.com/cns/index.html

A demented variety program of sorts, the Cross Skull home page offers a number of disturbingly odd and disgusting interactive segments, all fashioned after "unappreciated" San Francisco public-access television shows. Tune into *White Trash Cooking*, an alternative cooking program with the unseemly slob-of-a-chef host, Ed; click over to *The Phallics*, an animated sitcom with a single-minded point; or channel-surf over to *Methods of Torture*, a repulsive how-to for would-be executioners and sadists. No redeeming values at this site whatsoever, but a great recipe for Ed's "Gee Whiz" spread, a gentle mix of mayonnaise, SPAM and Cheeze Whiz.

VIRTUAL COW TIPPING AND COW TIPPING THE VRML WAY

www.epcntr.com/fun/tip_game.html

www.epcntr.com/fun/tipping.html

Let sleeping cows lie? Not at these cow tipping sites. Incorporating ShockWave and VRML, these games (in tribute to the prehistoric arcade hit, Frogger) allow players to push, flip and spin poor, unsuspecting bovines. But be wary of the bull stud who doesn't take kindly to all of this cow mooovement. One misstep, and you're cattle feed.

SELL YOUR SOUL FOR FUN AND PROFIT!

www.gaijin.com/EvilPeople/contract.html

As online transactions go, this one's awfully simple: Fill out the online form, press send and bang, there goes your immortal soul. In exchange for it, you get anything you want—or so say the folks at Evil People, Inc., "a Great Zaibatsu Engine of Darkness that will one day rule your every thought." After signing on for "an all-expense paid trip to hell," we were disappointed to find that that was all the site had to offer—no opportunity for a voyeuristic viewing of other people's submissions. And, of course, no guarantee the goods will be delivered. But if you're still searching for a Tickle-Me Elmo doll, the supernatural method might be worth a shot.

THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF BROMWYN BUNNY

bronte.cs.utas.edu.au/Bromwyn/

Bromwyn Bunny has been lost in London, tickled in Tokyo and caught performing "lewd acts" in Canada. This site invites the world to witness "the amazing adventures of a toy rabbit abducted three years ago and traveling the world ever since." The hapless Bromwyn, it explains, was snatched from the office of Tim Freeman by two of his fellow computer scientists at the University of Tasmania; "sightings" of the supposedly missing stuffed toy are chronicled in a series of photos under headings like "Evil Bunny-eating Totem Pole Runs Amok in Vancouver." The "official sightings" are pictures staged by the culprits themselves, but visitors are encouraged to send in sightings of their own: Photoshopped images of Bromwyn in the Oval Office and Bromwyn in space round out this surreal Web take on the "Where's Waldo?" concept.

BERT IS EVIL!

fractalcow.com/bert/bert.htm

"We have reason to believe that Bert of *Sesame Street* is evil and you should keep your children away from him." That's the danger purported at this page. The Webmaster has collected empirical evidence that Ernie's best friend can be linked to Jeffrey Dahmer and the death of Mr. Hooper. Also on the crib sheet, Bert is exposed by buddy Ernie and Kermit the Frog in full-length interviews. A warning goes out to sensitive types—some of the Photoshopped images in the archive may be offensive, such as Bert's "encounter" with Prairie Dawn. We were so traumatized halfway through viewing the site, that we didn't have the strength left to see what "Shoot-me-up Elmo" had to say.

CAT FOOD, THE OTHER WHITE MEAT

www.neosoft.com/stealth/catfood/

"My wife is always trying to feed me our cat's food (u know, slip it into a sandwich, etc.) and after several encounters, I've come to love the stuff!" About five clicks into this site, its point becomes clear.The Webmaster simply digs cat food. He attempts to make his case and then offers cat-culinary curious types some recipes for dishes such as cat food meat loaf and cat food croquettes. Are they serious? At the end of the site, the disclaimer states everything is for humor's sake and should not be taken seriously; however, that cat food pasta primavera sure looks tasty.

GENERAL DELIVERY UNIVERSITY

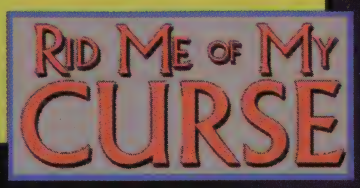
www.bandersnatch.com/gduedu.htm

Here's a chance to stick it to The Man. Why pay thousands of dollars for an education when all you really need is the diploma? General Delivery University will let you download the degree of your choice, from a law or medical degree to a "School of Hard Knocks" certificate. What does General Delivery U. charge you for this experience? Not a dime. If you've got the capability to download, the diploma is yours to do with as you see fit. Each discipline, such as Engineering and Education, has specific schools from which you may receive your diploma—for example, elevator and toy assembly or study hall and sex education. The diplomas cost netizens nothing, but a course catalog runs $3.95.

RID ME OF MY CURSE

home.earthlink.net/~anvil/

Who can turn down a desperate man's plea for help? The Webmaster of this site has been given a terrible curse and is soliciting the Web community for the cure. The curse has brought this Webmaster bad luck in various forms. Some of his evidence is moving. For instance, "I bought a brand-new Honda Civic. It was sporty and new and smelled great. Two weeks later, I hit a deer on a major highway," and other examples are "minor manifestations," such as bad cable TV service, getting the flu over the holidays and a cat attack. At the time of the review, the Webmaster's luck was approaching "fair" on the luck meter. So, we decided to send a special *IU* good luck token to him.



WANTED: LOMBARDI'S GAP

www.suba.com/~smonef/lombardi.html

You'd think the Super Bowl victory would have been enough to pacify even the most die-hard Packer fan, but here's a site for one cheesehead who still isn't satisfied with the Lombardi Trophy. Noel Franus won't rest until the Lombardi "gap" is restored. For the uninitiated, the U.S. Postal Service plans to issue a stamp honoring the legendary Packer coach Vince Lombardi this summer. Franus is upset, though, because the stamp's artist corrected Lombardi's infamous diastema. This site is the cornerstone of a campaign to restore the gap, which Franus says was "reflective of his very identity...gloss-free and quite confident."

THE CHURCH OF JUAN VALDEZ

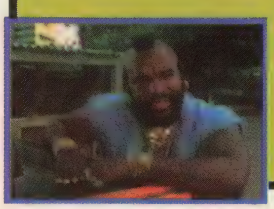
www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/1999/

If you worship coffee, here's a church you might consider joining. Forget the Father, Son and Holy Ghost—devotees of this church pay homage to Juan Valdez, the burro and the bean. Those interested in becoming religious bigwigs take note; Despite there being no annual dues or even a virtual collection plate, there are only nine devout Valdezians (for comparison's sake, there are 15 million Southern Baptists in the United States). Alas, it seems the good people behind the real Juan Valdez are not amused by the church; they've sent notice to the church elders asking them to stop using the Valdez logo in association with their faith.

MR. T QUOTE OF THE WEEK

www.uidaho.edu/~kowa9693/MrT/quote.htm

You'll have to look elsewhere for ball eating, fool (see page 15). Here you'll find just good old-fashioned wit and wisdom from the mouth of Lake Forest, Ill.'s favorite defoliator. While the site's creator could have just made this page one big orgy of Mr. T sound clips, by rationing the ruminations, the page lets users pause to ponder the words of the erstwhile world's toughest bouncer, sipping them like a fine port instead of guzzling them down like a bottle of ripple.



WHAT'S IN THAT HEAD OF YOURS?

WEIRD FERD

home.earthlink.net/~ferd/index.html

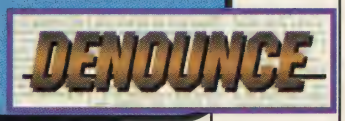
Something's wrong with Ferd. The wacky Webmaster has posted photographs of the infamous Flash Mountain girls to the Net. Who are the Flash Mountain girls? They're a group of free-spirited Disney World tourists who rode the Splash Mountain flume ride, barechested. A camera positioned across from the final five-story drop takes memorabilia shots of ride participants, and captured stills of the pert exhibitors.

The talk of many Usenet newsgroups, Weird Ferd has decided to expand his Flash Mountain girls photo gallery into a worldwide flashing contest: "Weird Ferd would like his fiends to send in their own flash pics from various public places." Surprisingly, netizens are partaking in the game and getting *nekked* in the strangest of places. So we decided to contact Ferd and ask, "What's in that head of yours?" Says Ferd, "If it wasn't for voyeurs...there wouldn't be exhibitionists."

DENOUNCE NEWS WIRE

www.denounce.com

Taking aim at a broad target—all those breathless press releases being pumped out by flaks at high tech companies—Denounce hits its mark straight on. The mock releases at this site include news that Microsoft had to end its "Where Do You Want to Go Today?" campaign after it received a deluge of e-mail with cryptic one-word messages like "Fourth and Elm" and "Egypt." Another announces that Netscape has perfected the "Crash-Ad," a plug-in that will display an ad banner every time your browser crashes.



THE SECRET DIARY OF BILL GATES, AGED 41¼

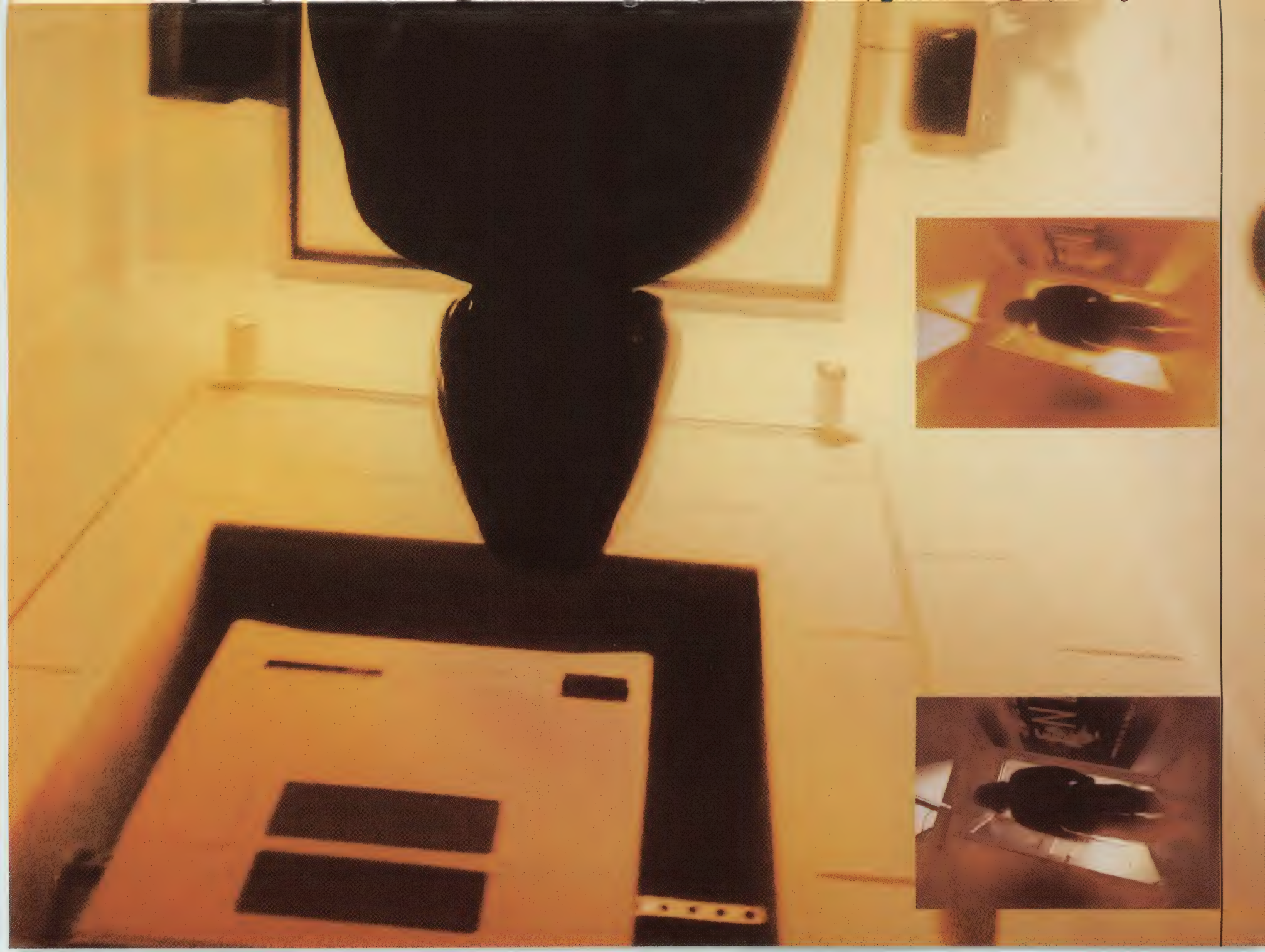
www.tiac.net/users/billg40/

What do you want to read today? If you answered, "the secret diary of Bill Gates," you're in luck. This exercise in (admittedly) creative writing explores a year-plus in the mind of America's premier billionerd. It's a little nasty, making Bill out to be a condescending, self-important stud, but it's a fun read for those who love to hate the wildly successful.

SOME ODD THINGS I HAVE SEEN IN AUSTRALIA

computershop.nepean.uws.edu.au/c/oddthings.html

This site's author visited Australia and came back with some odd things to report. Startling things Down Under include crossing signs for koalas, weird flush handles on toilets, speedy mail delivery and the fact that no one picks up roadkill. Sighs the Canadian, "Every day when I walked to the train station, this gruesome reminder of a creature that once ran out onto the road and was squashed was there. Every day it got flatter and flatter. The flesh at this point was baked by the unforgiving sun to the pavement and had turned black from all of the tires running over it. After weeks more had passed, it looked as though someone had just placed a piece of fur on the road."



ZEN AND THE ART OF HACKING

by Richard Thieme

photography by Jean Lannen

Separating The Real Hackers From The Pretenders

Don't call them hackers, call them *Homo sapiens hackii*—human beings who are "back-engineered" by their symbiotic relationship with computer networks to frame reality in ways shaped by that interaction. They're not a new species, but they're a new variety, and just like the pod people in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, they're everywhere. But how can separate the real thing from the pretenders?

Looks, jargon and hard-guy handles are too easy to imitate. Besides, real hackers blend in well with their surroundings—that's the point of social engineering, after all—and hide in large corporations, high-tech start-ups and IT departments, and in intelligence, security and law enforcement.

Some don't even use computers very much.

"I couldn't hack my way out of a wet paper bag," confesses William Knowles, who hangs out on a hacker listserv. "But information hacking, social engineering, dumpster diving, yes—and I'm a terror on the telephone. I am the gatekeeper's worst nightmare!"

"It comes down to a common quest for knowledge," Knowles says. "Why does it do what it does? Who, what, where, when, why, how?"

Hackers are distinguished by their hunger for knowledge. They long to see things whole and yearn to know how things work. Their power derives from the critical knowledge that leverages other knowledge, their enthusiasm from an adrenaline rush that comes when they finally make that connection, solve that puzzle.

When the door against which you've been banging your head suddenly dissolves and you slip effortlessly to the next level—that's the joy of hacking. But the game isn't Doom or Quake, the game is life, and the playing field is the infinity of the wired world that your mind explores in the night like a stealth fighter.

Some hackers have been wired since early childhood; they see the world in the image of networks.

When you learn as a child how to creep unnoticed into root under cover of darkness, or hide in a sniffer that's a surrogate self so you can steal the secrets of the rich and powerful or observe the hidden life of corporations and governments, learn how it really is behind the fictions by which men live, then steal away at dawn leaving not so much as a single track in the melting snows of cyberspace—then you know what hacking means.

Hackers are men and women who go where they must go to learn what they must learn.

Often portrayed as rebellious heretics, hackers are in fact faithful followers of three gods:

*Odin, who hung cold and alone in a windswept tree for nine long days and nights, sleepless and single-hearted, in order to seize the knowledge of the Runes. The Runes were symbols of what the Greeks called *logos*, the creative power of the Word, the magic of consciousness acting on inanimate matter and making it plastic.

*The trickster Coyote, who some call Pan, his wry humor a grin in the shadows, his appetites and passions a firestorm of Dionysian ardor.

*Jesus the man, the earthy Jew, a real mensch rather than a dreamy-eyed Nordic nanny-of-the-planet, who refused to knuckle under to convention or the suffocating constraints of the lowest common denominator of the crowd.

Lighten Up

Hackers have a sense of humor.

Dr. Bergan Evans, an English professor at Northwestern University, spoke with a chuckle in the early '60s of a social worker's excessive worry about "juvenile delinquents" stealing cars. He recalled how he and his boyhood chums stole away in the night to loose the horses from a neighbor's corral.

"It wasn't called delinquency in my day," he said. "It was called 'boys will be boys.'"

We discover in the process of living

A DICTIONARY DEFINITION

One of the motherlodes of hacker folklore is the Jargon File, available online at **www.ccil.org/jargon** and on paper as *The New Hacker's Dictionary* from MIT Press. The Jargon File is a thought-provoking tour of hacker culture that's a hoot to boot. That's why *IU* sought out the File's editor, Eric S. Raymond, when seeking a definition of the oft-maligned word 'hacker.'

"The term 'hacker' has been abused a lot, and most of the people who make a big deal about calling themselves 'hackers' really aren't. They're what real hackers call wanna-bes, or crackers. The basic difference is, hackers build things. Crackers only break them," Raymond says .

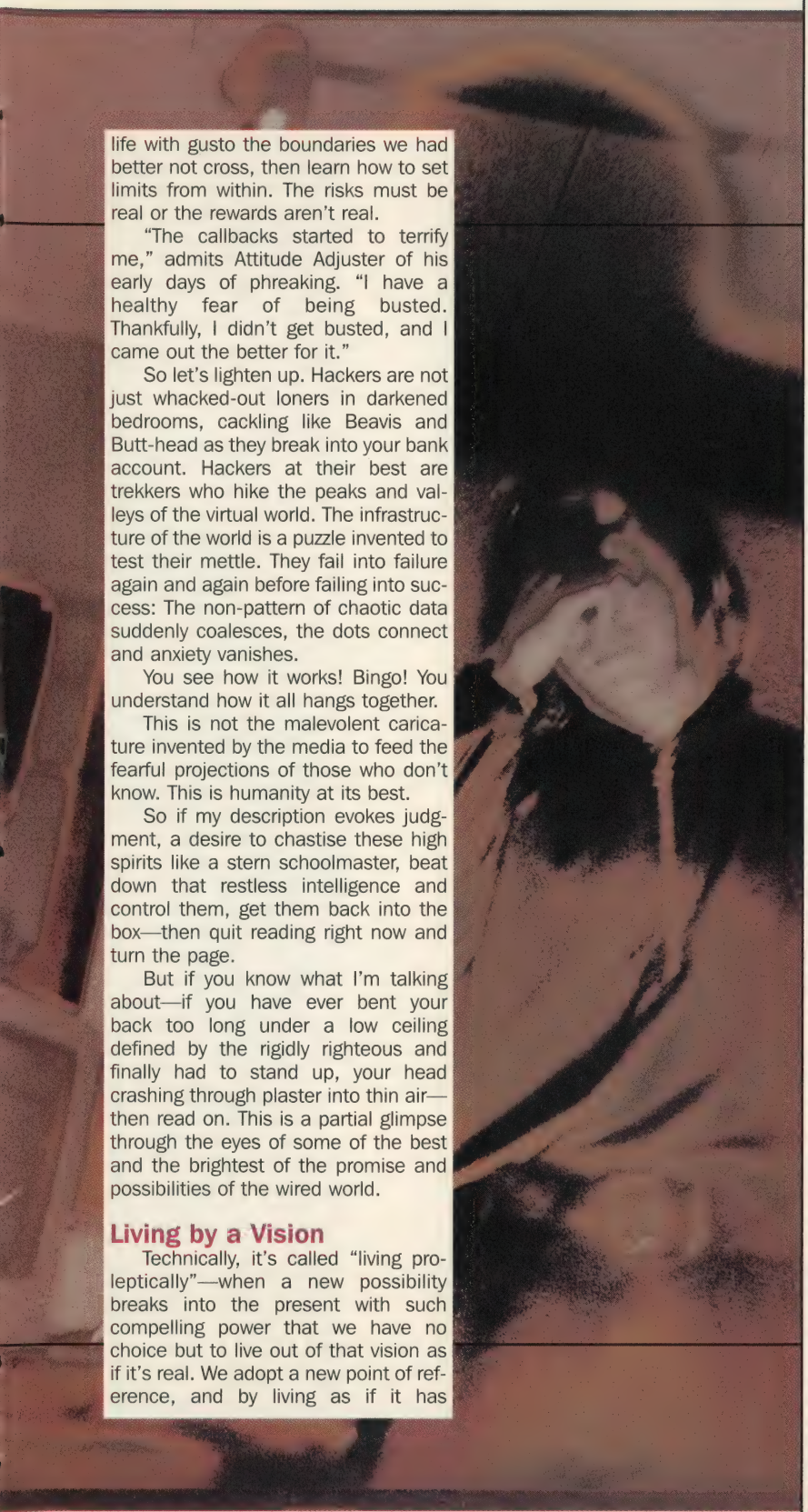
Not shy about his contempt for people who observe hacking as something synonymous with phreaking phones or running packet-sniffers, Raymond scoffs at aliases of some well-known network tinkerers. "Knowing how to break security doesn't make you a hacker any more than knowing how to hotwire cars makes you an auto mechanic."

"The *real* hackers," he says with some heat, "are the people who built the Internet and Unix and Emacs and the World Wide Web, and who are building things like Linux and Java tools and VRML and lots of useful free software today. Those are the people the Jargon File is about. And they don't like being confused with system-cracking juvenile delinquents one bit."

But is it perhaps some kind of generational phenomenon—aren't hackers just crackers grown up and gone respectable? Not according to Raymond. "Most of the hundreds of hackers I cooperate with are teens or tweens. They're just quieter than the crackers, so journalists don't notice them. While they're building the future, crackers strut around calling themselves hackers without ever earning the title, and then get all the press."

Nevertheless, it is true that the people Raymond calls "real hackers" average a few years older, and include a good many tribal elders (respectfully known as "old farts") who've been on the Internet since its Old Stone Age in the early '70s. Raymond himself is 39, a few years younger than the ancients, and denies being one of them himself. "I've only been on the Internet for 20 years," he laughs, "I'm a good five years from old-farthood yet."

For people who want to learn about hackerdom as proposed by Raymond, the Jargon File editor maintains a Web page at **www.ccil.org/~esr/faqs/hacker-howto.html** that details the process. It's not a path for the larcenous, faint-hearted or lazy.



life with gusto the boundaries we had better not cross, then learn how to set limits from within. The risks must be real or the rewards aren't real.

"The callbacks started to terrify me," admits Attitude Adjuster of his early days of phreaking. "I have a healthy fear of being busted. Thankfully, I didn't get busted, and I came out the better for it."

So let's lighten up. Hackers are not just whacked-out loners in darkened bedrooms, cackling like Beavis and Butt-head as they break into your bank account. Hackers at their best are trekkers who hike the peaks and valleys of the virtual world. The infrastructure of the world is a puzzle invented to test their mettle. They fail into failure again and again before failing into success: The non-pattern of chaotic data suddenly coalesces, the dots connect and anxiety vanishes.

You see how it works! Bingo! You understand how it all hangs together.

This is not the malevolent caricature invented by the media to feed the fearful projections of those who don't know. This is humanity at its best.

So if my description evokes judgment, a desire to chastise these high spirits like a stern schoolmaster, beat down that restless intelligence and control them, get them back into the box—then quit reading right now and turn the page.

But if you know what I'm talking about—if you have ever bent your back too long under a low ceiling defined by the rigidly righteous and finally had to stand up, your head crashing through plaster into thin air—then read on. This is a partial glimpse through the eyes of some of the best and the brightest of the promise and possibilities of the wired world.

Living by a Vision

Technically, it's called "living proleptically"—when a new possibility breaks into the present with such compelling power that we have no choice but to live out of that vision as if it's real. We adopt a new point of reference, and by living as if it has already happened, we make it real.

Hang out with hackers and you'll find yourself moving toward their way of framing reality. That's how we know that the *tao*—the way things are flowing—is moving in that direction.

Example: A teacher I know was supposed to teach her fourth graders how to use computers but she didn't know how. She made a secret pact with her three brightest students to meet her after school to teach her computing so she could teach the other students computing.

Of course many hackers are bored with school! They haven't the patience to wait while the teachers catch up. They don't want information delivered at the plodding pace of a curriculum through a command-and-control structure. They want to get out there on the wires and get it themselves.

"The administrator that I work for at school," says Attitude Adjuster, "lets me hack the system all I want. He doesn't interfere because he doesn't know what I'm doing. Sometimes he asks me, 'What should I do next?' I can't believe what I'm hearing. I want to say, 'You mean you haven't figured that out yet from the logical progression of things?' I used to try to tell him what to do next and he would ask, 'Why?' I stopped answering because any answer I gave him, he couldn't understand. He could never see the Big Picture so the details never connected in a way that made sense."

Se7en, a noted hacker, says, "There were a lot of great discoveries through the years, but the greatest was how I grew in knowledge in my own eyes. The giant telephone company and many of the all-knowing corporations really had very little clue as to what they were doing. The all-powerful government—starting wars, controlling your life—did not have a clue as to what a computer is or what it can do."

A hacker and phreaker from the age of 11, Se7en recently came up from the underground, looking for a little light and air. He now lectures engineers in the intelligence community on the psychology of hacking—how to tell from the tracks if an intruder is a trophy-hunting kid or an intelligence agent looking for proprietary data.

"The realization that all of these people that as a kid you're told to respect and fear—in a lot of ways you're a lot smarter than many of these people...You find out there's nothing special about these people. Here you are, some little 15- or 16-year old kid, you can do things that the phone company can't even do or the government can't even do."

Living As If the New World is Already Here

For some, that vision begins with a blinding light; for others it just happens to happen.

"My first computer was a

Commodore 64," says DIALTONE_, who works for a high-tech Canadian company. "I started with games, but they bored me, so I started looking into the works of the computer. It fascinated the hell out of me!" After getting his first modem and being turned on to hacking by the sysop of a BBS, he hacked into his first computer.

"As I was exploring. I had this feeling of...it was a feeling you can't explain, anxiety to get ahold and see everything I could. Sure, I was scared at first, but that disappeared as I discovered what was in this machine."

Modify remembers it similarly.

"My first real hack was into the system of a nuclear engineering company. I took the unshadowed password file, then went back to take a look at the system itself...Wow, was it great! You're torn between two emotions. One is, what if I screw up and leave my muddy footprints all over the computer? The other is, what does this thing do? What information does it hold? You are 'God' over that machine."

For Attitude Adjuster, his interest developed more gradually through conversations with kindred spirits.

"More than anything else, it was something I talked about with other kids who used public computers in the library. We'd sit around and speculate about other systems, huddle around the single Unix reference the library owned."

The Machinery is Always On

Hackers are need-to-know machines, obsessively searching for a way to scratch that itch and gain momentary peace before it flares up again.

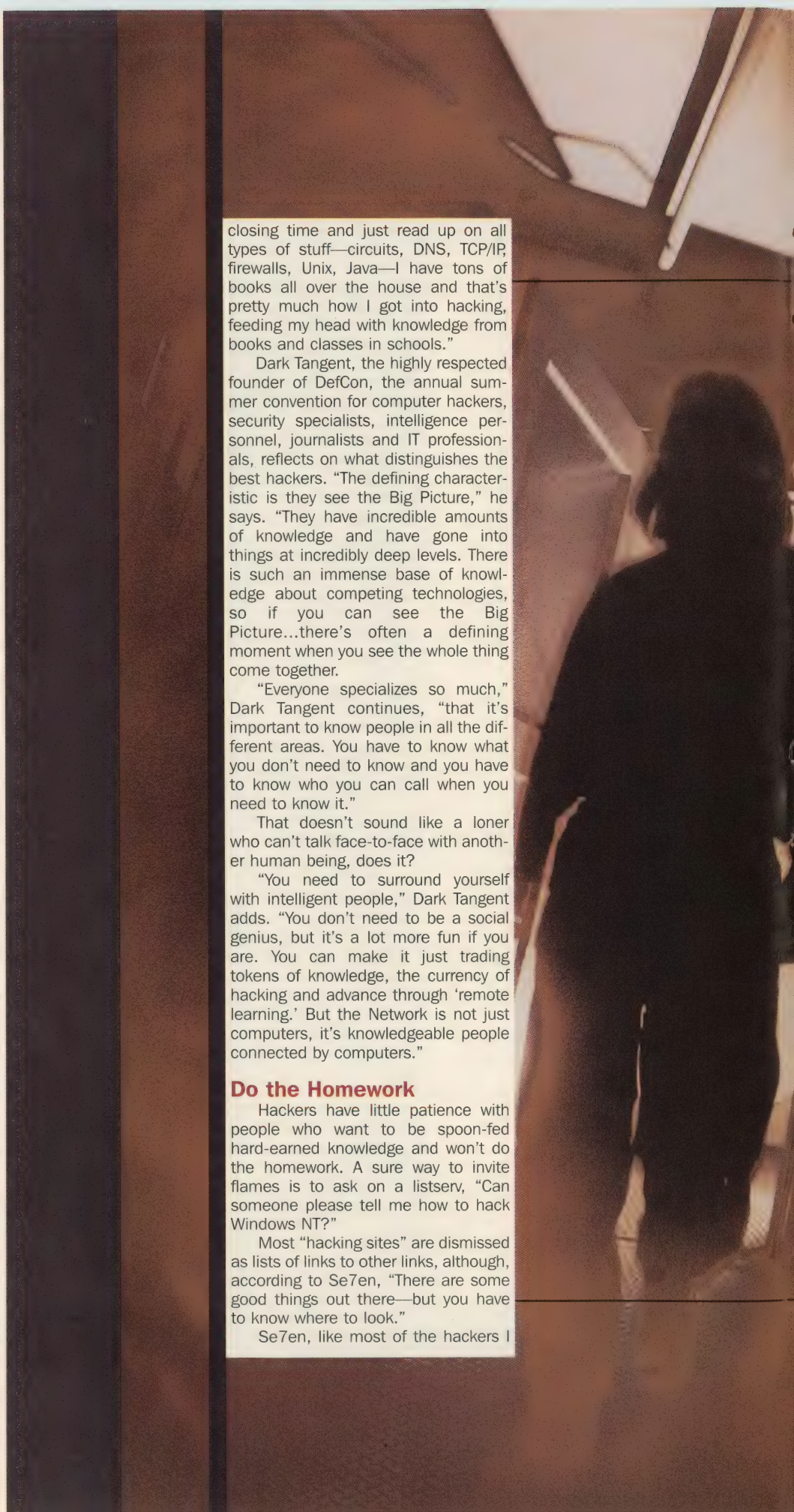
The popular perception of hackers as malicious warez kiddies downloading someone else's code draws contempt from hackers who earn their knowledge with sleepless nights and relentless exploration.

Use someone else's scripts to do something malicious or damage someone's system?

"That's not hacking," says Yobie Benjamin, a respected emerging technologies consultant. Benjamin has worked with Netscape, Sun Microsystems, Boeing, Hewlett Packard and many others on prototyping, project development and product design. He knows that many respectable names in high-tech commerce earned their stripes as hackers.

"Sure, we all did some of that when we were kids first starting out. Maybe that's all you know how to do when you begin. But what moves me is, what's out there? Hacking for me is more than a quest, it's *the* quest—the quest for knowledge."

Listen to Modify: "When I went on to learn advanced programming languages, I would sit in a bookstore until closing time and just read up on all types of stuff—circuits, DNS, TCP/IP, firewalls, Unix, Java—I have tons of books all over the house and that's pretty much how I got into hacking, feeding my head with knowledge from books and classes in schools."



Dark Tangent, the highly respected founder of DefCon, the annual summer convention for computer hackers, security specialists, intelligence personnel, journalists and IT professionals, reflects on what distinguishes the best hackers. "The defining characteristic is they see the Big Picture," he says. "They have incredible amounts of knowledge and have gone into things at incredibly deep levels. There is such an immense base of knowledge about competing technologies, so if you can see the Big Picture...there's often a defining moment when you see the whole thing come together.

"Everyone specializes so much," Dark Tangent continues, "that it's important to know people in all the different areas. You have to know what you don't need to know and you have to know who you can call when you need to know it."

That doesn't sound like a loner who can't talk face-to-face with another human being, does it?

"You need to surround yourself with intelligent people," Dark Tangent adds. "You don't need to be a social genius, but it's a lot more fun if you are. You can make it just trading tokens of knowledge, the currency of hacking and advance through 'remote learning.' But the Network is not just computers, it's knowledgeable people connected by computers."

Do the Homework

Hackers have little patience with people who want to be spoon-fed hard-earned knowledge and won't do the homework. A sure way to invite flames is to ask on a listserv, "Can someone please tell me how to hack Windows NT?"

Most "hacking sites" are dismissed as lists of links to other links, although, according to Se7en, "There are some good things out there—but you have to know where to look."

Se7en, like most of the hackers I

HACKER SPEAK

Let Eric S. Raymond's Jargon File, a collection of commonly used hacker words and phrases, act as interpreter between you and those much talked about wizards of the technological world. Here's a random sampling:

crufty: /kruhf'tee/ /adj./ [origin unknown; poss. From 'crusty' or 'cruddy'] 1. Poorly built, possibly over-complex. The {canonical} example is "This is standard old crufty {DEC} software." In fact, one fanciful theory of the origin of 'crufty' holds that it was originally a mutation of 'crusty' applied to DEC software so old that the 's' characters were tall and skinny, looking more like 'f' characters. 2. Unpleasant, especially to the touch, often with encrusted junk. Like spilled coffee smeared with peanut butter and catsup. 3. Generally unpleasant.
4. (sometimes spelled 'cruftie') /n./ A small crufty object (see {frob}); often one that doesn't fit well into the scheme of things. "A LISP property list is a good place to store crufties (or, collectively, {random} cruft)."

frob: /frob/ 1. /n./ The {TMRC} definition was "FROB = a protruding arm or trunnion"; by metaphoric extension, a 'frob' is any random small thing; an object that you can comfortably hold in one hand; something you can frob (sense 2). See {frobnitz}. 2. /vt./ Abbreviated form of {frobnicate}; to manipulate or adjust, to tweak. One frequently frobs bits or other 2-state devices. Thus: "Please frob the light switch" (that is, flip it), but also "Stop frobbing that clasp; you'll break it."

loser: /n./ An unexpectedly bad situation, program, programmer or person. Someone who habitually loses. (Even winners can lose occasionally.) Someone who knows not and knows not that he knows not

magic: /adj./ 1. As yet unexplained, or too complicated to explain; compare {automagically} and (Arthur C.) Clarke's Third Law: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." "TTY echoing is controlled by a large number of magic bits." "This routine magically computes the parity of an 8-bit byte in three instructions." 2. Characteristic of something that works although no one really understands why (this is especially called {black magic}).

troll: /v.,n./ [From the Usenet group alt.folklore.urban] To utter a posting on {Usenet} designed to attract predictable responses or {flame}s. Derives from the phrase "trolling for {newbie}s," which in turn comes from mainstream "trolling," a style of fishing in which one trails bait through a likely spot hoping for a bite. The well-constructed troll is a post that induces lots of newbies and flamers to make themselves look even more clueless than they already do, while subtly conveying to the more savvy and experienced that it is in fact a deliberate troll. If you don't fall for the joke, you get to be in on it.

spoke with, connected with a mentor at a critical moment in his career. That mentor taught him how to look through trash for hours to find the few significant items that would let him gain entry to the telephone system; more importantly, his mentor taught him by example how to mentor.

"I tell people to learn the way I learn," Se7en says. "Read, read, read, learn, learn, learn. Do everything you can to answer your own questions first. Get good books on Unix or Windows NT security or TCP/IP, then come to me with the questions you can't answer."

By being available to provide information at the right moment to enable a learner to leverage what he already knows, Se7en defines the ideal coach.

"That's why I surround myself with intelligent people," Dark Tangent says. "My friends all know things I don't. I never answer e-mail that says 'teach me, teach me.' The knowledge is out there for anyone who is committed. Give the word 'hack' to a search engine and start plowing through the thousands of hits you get."

Modify remembers staying up all night coding text games and debugging others' programs, learning by doing. One of his early connections was Ruff-Neck, who told him, "Learn as much as you can and don't think of problems as problems. Think of them more as challenges."

DIALTONE_ adds, "I'm not unwilling to help others, but I'm not going to teach a kid to hack. There's no future in it and often someone who is just starting is focused entirely on 'illegal hacking' and will end up getting busted."

He gives the example of a student at the high school where he works. Lots of people want to "run the Network," he says, but "she's the only one willing to do what it takes to learn about it. She started asking specific, pointed questions about networking. That earned her my undivided attention and assistance in learning."

A hacker named Artimage says, "Many people complain that older hackers won't teach them anything or answer questions. First, these people taught themselves, no one gave them the information. Second, if you have researched your question to the best of your abilities beforehand, and it is a specific question, it will most often be answered.

"Hackers teach themselves. That's the whole point...If you want to crack into systems, you can have someone show you how, but to be a hacker means that you explore the system on your own..."

And finally, listen to Rogue Agent set someone straight on a listserv.

"You want to create hackers? Don't tell them how to do this or that. Show them how to discover it for

themselves. Those who have the innate drive will get the point and find tutorials written by experts or dive in and learn by trial and error. Those who don't will fall by the wayside, staying comfortable within the bounds of their safe little lives."

The Journey Becomes a Quest

With power comes responsibility.

I was talking with Dead Addict about the adrenaline rush that comes when you discover valuable information and are tempted to use it. "That's the trouble with being God," he said. "You can look but you can't touch."

Maybe that's what Dark Tangent means when he speaks of keeping your balance and "managing your ego," which he does by hanging out with smart friends. That keeps the limits of his own knowledge in perspective.

Perspective is needed as you move down the hacker's path. You discover that the fact of hacking makes a commitment for you to pierce the veil of illusion and discover the truth. That can be lonely. It gets cold out there, hanging night after night in a windswept tree.

"Your perspective changes as a result of learning how things really work," Dark Tangent observes. "I have had to recognize that my perception of reality is fundamentally different than that of people who don't want to know how it really is. You can come off sounding cynical, but it isn't cynicism, really, it's just that you have had experiences they haven't and that deeper reality becomes your point of departure and your point of reference."

That's why hackers necessarily build a community founded on camaraderie, mutual respect, and enough trust to get the job done balanced by a healthy dose of paranoia. That community is regulated by an informal system of norms and shared values, a code derived from experience. Like all codes, the Hackers' Code is a plumb line enabling hackers to "true themselves up" when they get off track.

"The ethic is there—it really is," insists Attitude Adjuster. "There will always be malicious kids who don't understand, and maybe all of us were there at one time, but evolution will single them out. They'll either get busted or close enough to being busted (like I was) to get scared back onto the right path."

DIALTONE_ and his cohorts in =x9= drew up a code of ethics that reveals why the world of hacking can look so different inside than from outside. The Code is proscriptive (don't do it) about intentional damage to others' systems but pragmatic as to how to protect yourself when crossing the borders that must be crossed to hack in the first place.

The contextual shift through which our culture is moving is immense. Hackers live in the gray areas that *must* exist as we redefine ourselves. Many began hacking when there was nothing illegal about cracking games, copying an article or singing camp songs without a permit.

Intellectual property rights? International traffic in digital goods? The ownership of a link?

"How clearly are these boundaries defined?" laughs Tim Muth, an attorney who specializes in cyberlaw. "Come back in five years when we've had some cases. I'll tell you then."

The Spirit of Hacking

Hackers refuse to be defined by conventional wisdom, conventional behavior. In the '60s the hackers at MIT became known for a spirit of exploration as the virtual world became an emergent reality on mainframes. Then the media skewed the image of hackers toward the criminal misfit and forced the distinction between hackers and crackers, those who use hacking skills to cause damage or steal secrets. Hackers are fighting a battle they may have already lost to save their name.

If the best hackers are not hanging porno on government Web sites, what *are* they doing? Where is the "redeeming social value" in all this?

First, many who make their living in computer security, military and civilian intelligence and law enforcement learned their craft as hackers or hire hackers.

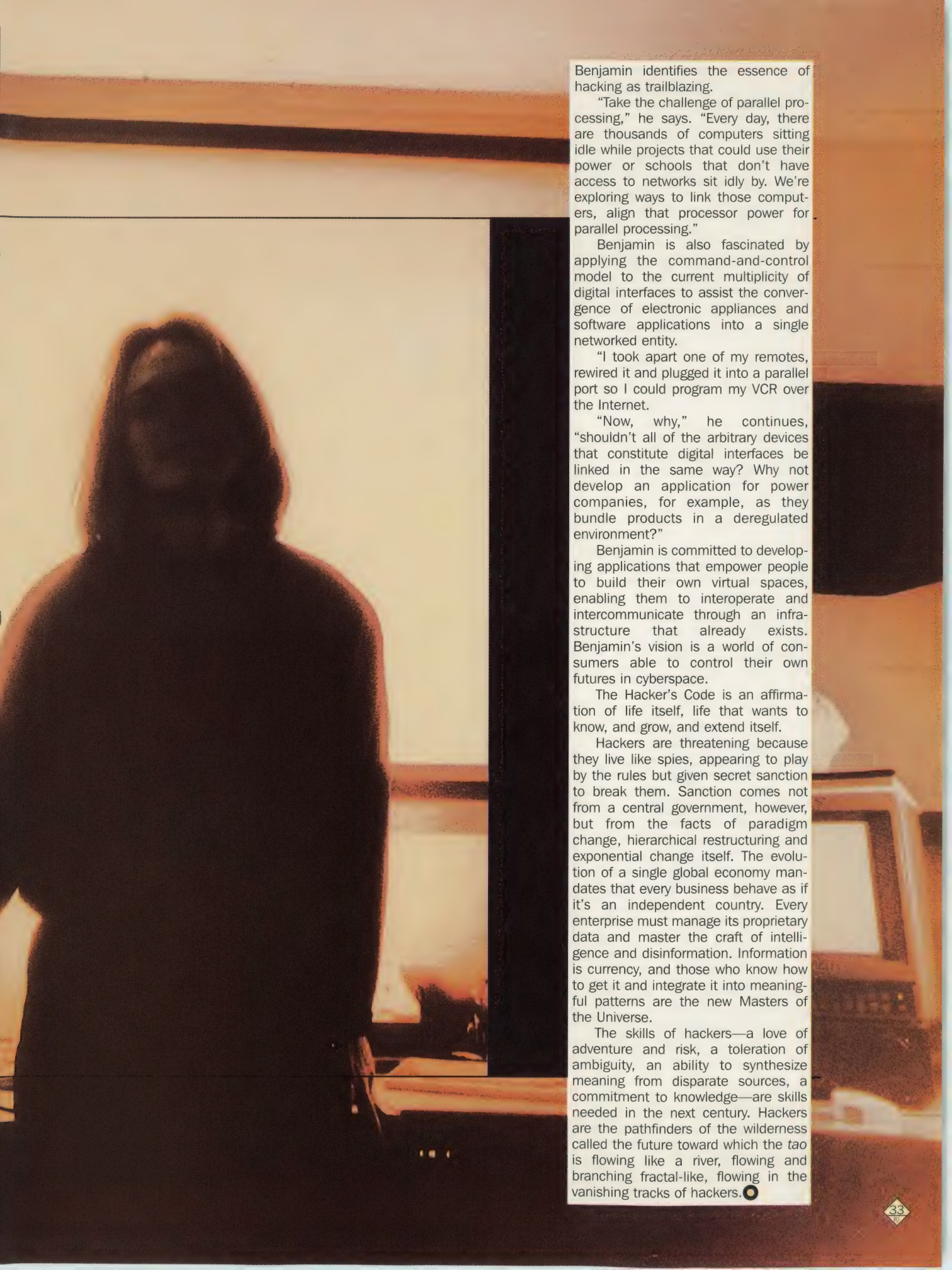
Secondly, hackers provide value for the computer industry by identifying bugs and security holes. Many software companies count on hackers to work free to locate holes in their applications. What else is a beta version? Why else do manufacturers of firewalls offer cash to penetrate their systems?

Yobie Benjamin, working with cohorts from the l0pht and the DoC group, discovered several serious holes in Windows NT 4.0, not the least of which was the ability to steal passwords in an entire NT domain and capture all the traffic in an NT Network.

Unlike criminals intent on exploiting these flaws, their exploits were shared with Microsoft and the public.

"The only thing the public knows about hackers is how they defaced some Web page or crashed a server," Modify says. "They never hear about the hacker that e-mails an administrator about the holes in his security or fixes security breaches for a system administrator."

Third, hackers engage in wide-ranging projects that have great promise for future applications.



Benjamin identifies the essence of hacking as trailblazing.

"Take the challenge of parallel processing," he says. "Every day, there are thousands of computers sitting idle while projects that could use their power or schools that don't have access to networks sit idly by. We're exploring ways to link those computers, align that processor power for parallel processing."

Benjamin is also fascinated by applying the command-and-control model to the current multiplicity of digital interfaces to assist the convergence of electronic appliances and software applications into a single networked entity.

"I took apart one of my remotes, rewired it and plugged it into a parallel port so I could program my VCR over the Internet.

"Now, why," he continues, "shouldn't all of the arbitrary devices that constitute digital interfaces be linked in the same way? Why not develop an application for power companies, for example, as they bundle products in a deregulated environment?"

Benjamin is committed to developing applications that empower people to build their own virtual spaces, enabling them to interoperate and intercommunicate through an infrastructure that already exists. Benjamin's vision is a world of consumers able to control their own futures in cyberspace.

The Hacker's Code is an affirmation of life itself, life that wants to know, and grow, and extend itself.

Hackers are threatening because they live like spies, appearing to play by the rules but given secret sanction to break them. Sanction comes not from a central government, however, but from the facts of paradigm change, hierarchical restructuring and exponential change itself. The evolution of a single global economy mandates that every business behave as if it's an independent country. Every enterprise must manage its proprietary data and master the craft of intelligence and disinformation. Information is currency, and those who know how to get it and integrate it into meaningful patterns are the new Masters of the Universe.

The skills of hackers—a love of adventure and risk, a toleration of ambiguity, an ability to synthesize meaning from disparate sources, a commitment to knowledge—are skills needed in the next century. Hackers are the pathfinders of the wilderness called the future toward which the *tao* is flowing like a river, flowing and branching fractal-like, flowing in the vanishing tracks of hackers.

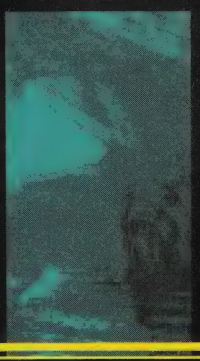
UNDERGROUND

Visit Underground Online, the Webbed companion to *Internet Underground*

Electric Paper: All the URLs from this issue

WebGuide: Reviews of and links to thousands of Web sites

Classic *IU*: Features from our archives



underground ONLINE

http://www.underground-online.com

SHOW US THE CHEESE

Lord knows we tried to ignore them. We started to notice them all over—on billboards, on TV commercials, on box tops—and we tried to disregard them. But over time, as they grew and multiplied, we weakened. It became too hard to continue to overlook them, so we took the plunge. We gingerly entered the neat and tidy addresses (no tildes here!) into our browser's location window and what we saw, once the 500k image maps and requisite Shockwave apps loaded, both frightened and captivated us.

We're talking about corporate Web sites, those strange and bizarre creatures that are meant to prove how a company or brand has plugged itself into the information age. Mostly though, they just show how cheesy corporate America is.

Speaking of cheese, we've divided this feature into three parts for easy digestion.

First up is assistant editor Gloria Mitchell's fascinating look at the Fertnel empire and the company's fabled CEO Jon Armstrong. What, you've never heard of Fertnel? For the uninformed, Fertnel is the company responsible for some of the finest snack cheeze and snack cheeze byproducts on the market, including Glow Cheeze, Spray Cheeze, Meat Nickels and Blue-Cheeze-a-Pet, and was one of the first companies to hawk its wares on the Net.

Next, you'll find managing editor Alex Gordon and features editor Sarah Ellerman's exhaustive report on the very worst of corporate Web sites. Ignoring any sites they thought might have intrinsic value (sites for cars, medicine, etc.), Gordon and Ellerman focused on URLs that had been publicized, figuring if corporate honchos were enticing consumers to visit their virtual homes, those sites were fit fodder for flagellation. And after visiting every corporate site on the Web (OK, maybe they missed a few), what they found wasn't pretty: broken links, misspellings, stale pages and yes, the Great Mayo Blaster (talk about cheesy).

Scattered amongst the cheese, our intrepid duo also found a few sites that were actually decent. Yes, somewhere, somehow, some corporate honchos got it right; congratulations. A report on those sites makes up the third part of this feature.

But enough foreshadowing. Let's get on with the feature. It's time to show you the *cheese*.

by the *IU* Staff
Cheese Photos by Troy Brophy

A one-man evil

corporate

superpower

carves out his

chunk of

cyberspace

cheeze

NEXT TIME YOU THINK

According to the home page at **www.fertnel.com**, Fertnel is an international manufacturer of "snack cheeze and snack cheeze byproducts." In a country where spectator sports aren't the same without nachos and no office or dormitory is complete without a vending machine, it stands to reason that Fertnel should hold sway over the lives of millions.

And perhaps, somewhere deep in the psyche of site creator Jon Armstrong, it does. Armstrong started the fictional company in 1984, writing up company news on a Macintosh and illustrating it using MacPaint.

"I sent it to a substantial number of, you know, like, three people," he says, referring to the friends who received occasional word of Fertnel's products and philosophy, perhaps with some oblique references to its many lawsuits.

Later, in an "ever-escalating effort" to keep his friends amused, Armstrong opened up official Fertnel headquarters on the Web. "I sat in front of a computer and stared at it and thought, 'Hey, I could steal from myself.'" The new incarnation, an elaborate parody of a corporate Web site, enjoins netizens everywhere to "Think Fertnel!"

Visitors to the site can have a look around a "cozy cheeze processing sub-station" (they simply have to imagine "the fragrant smell of bubbling enzymes" that wafts through it). The "world-famous Fertn-o-Bot Remote Arm Tester (RAT)," which helps ensure that "few, if any, snack scientists are maimed" in product testing, is shown as a QuickTime movie. Then there are the fun facts about such Fertnel-manufactured snacks as Glow Cheeze, Spray Cheeze, Meat Nickels and Blue-Cheeze-a-Pet ("sprinkle on the spores and watch it grow a thick coat of mold!"). Readers can also send in questions about Fertnel products, which Armstrong puts up on the site, along with his answers:

Glow Cheeze makes my intestines all tingly. Is this normal?

"The Legal Team defines 'tingly' as 'satisfied and appropriate,' so yes, it is normal. Our Snack Scientists remind you not to store photographic film next to Glow Cheeze, or, for that matter, hold your camera too close to your gut after you've enjoyed a large hunk of Glow Cheeze. The 'friendly' radiation given off by our snack food will often ruin your snapshots."

I like to eat snacks in the bathtub. Do any of your Fertnel Snacks float?

"Our Diving-Sub Chewy Toy was recalled a year and a half ago after several unfortunate accidents. Most of the children have recovered, we are happy to report. If you like playing with your food, like our Snack Scientists, do try Meat Biplanes. They really fly!"

I've recently been enjoying vast amounts of Fertnel's Glow Cheeze and I am no longer 'regular.' What does your team recommend?

"Please buy a tub of our New Extra Strength Laxo Cheeze, the delicious laxative that's great melted over nachos! Please note, it tends to 'work' seven and one half minutes after ingestion, so be sure to snack near the appropriate facilities."

Armstrong's clearly worked a little harder at amusing his friends than those of us who like to recite the occasional choice bit of Monty Python from memory. In fact, he says he's gotten a good bit of business from companies who've seen Fertnel and his other site, Phos4 (**www.phos4.com**), and want him to do Web design work. "Although," he adds, "most companies say, 'We like this, but don't do this with our stuff.'"

The Fertnel site itself may become a moneymaking venture—the actual product, of course, will be entertainment and not snacks. Armstrong may not have the 16,347 lawyers he attributes to Fertnel, but he has gotten legal advice about the business aspects of a profitable site. "This lawyer I was talking to said, 'You know, you should be doing X, Y and Z,' in terms of some legalese mentioning that it all becomes my property and all that kind of stuff. Because I never did that; I was just, you know, goofing around. I never thought of the legal implications. And I wasn't making any money, I was just doing it for fun."

He plans to add the appropriate jargon to his question submission form once the site finds sponsorship; it'll be in keeping with the lawsuit-paranoid tone of Fertnel (the company's work force, the site says, is more than 73 percent lawyers). And if Armstrong needs a model for his legal jargon, there are plenty of real corporate sites out there that put up similar terms and conditions of use.

For instance, the official site of Olean (**www.olean.com**), Procter & Gamble's fat-substitute product, tells its visitors that "By transmitting or posting any communication or material to this site you agree that Procter & Gamble or any of its affiliates may use your communication as material for any purpose, including reproduction, transmission, publication, broadcast and posting. Procter & Gamble will not have the ability to respond to messages posted to this site. Furthermore, do not post or transmit any unlawful, threatening, libelous, defamatory, obscene, pornographic or profane material or any material that could constitute or encourage conduct that would be considered a criminal offense or violate any law."

Of course, Armstrong doesn't actually want to prohibit his visitors from sending in whatever queries they can dream up; he describes some of the questions he gets as "really gross stuff, but kind of fun stuff." And he seems capable of coming up with likely legal disclaimers and pseudoscientific language all on his own—at times, he even seems to anticipate the sorts of things real companies put up on their sites.

For example, he got a message from a reader who'd seen the Olean site and wrote to him to proclaim, "They stole from you, man!" Armstrong adds, "I went and checked it out, and I did see some similarities. They had just as many disgusting questions; it was almost like 'Ask the Snack Scientists.' But I don't know if they looked at mine."

Even fairly tenuous links between reality and parody can rouse the curiosity—and suspicions—of Fertnel visitors. Armstrong remembers another bit of e-mail he received from someone who claimed to work at Frito-Lay. "His first message was like, 'Are you a disgruntled former employee?' And I told him I wasn't. But I wanted to be."

That sneaking desire to wield vast capitalistic power may explain why Armstrong has kept Fertnel going, developing new products and plotting imaginary corporate takeovers ("While Fertnel doesn't yet have plans to divide up the company, sell assets and lay off a slew of workers, we are interested in separating the company into pieces, increasing profits at any expense and replacing humans with machines and primates").

"It's fun to pretend you're an evil corporation," Armstrong admits. "It's kind of therapeutic: pollute, destroy, you know..."

Which is to say, for the fun of wholesale destruction without the threat of legal retribution, think Fertnel.

THINK FERTNEL

PAYDAY CANDY BARS

www.paydaybar.com

URL Encountered: On a billboard on the side of Chicago's Eisenhower Expressway.

Atmosphere: *Rocky Horror Picture Show* meets a high-priced hooker.

What's the Point? Wander around some mysterious chick's apartment, trying to figure out where she hid her stash of Paydays.

Purchase: One-size-fits-all boxer shorts with pictures of *nuts* all over them.

Random Quote: "Take one, unwrap it, and nuke it on a microwave-safe plate for about 10 seconds. It's amazing!"

GATORADE

www.gatorade.com

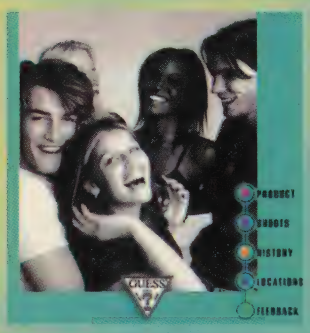
URL Encountered: On the label of a bottle of Citrus Cooler.

Atmosphere: Hip, sporty, energetic site that allows sedentary computer users to fantasize that they might have need of a high-tech thirst-quenching beverage.

What's the Point? Delude yourself into total fitness.

Purchase: Grape- and banana-flavored carbo gel—just rip open a pack and *squeeze*.

Random Quote: "*Q:* How much Gatorade Thirst Quencher can I drink? *A:* As much as you'd like. There is absolutely no restriction on the amount of Gatorade that people can drink."



GUESS JEANS

www.guess.com

URL Encountered: On a garish black-and-pink promotional mousepad.

Atmosphere: Sultry models pouting and tossing their tresses.

What's the Point? There is no point, but the rare, unreleased photos of Drew Barrymore somehow make it *all* seem OK.

Purchase: Nothing. You have to go to the mall for that kind of thing.

Random Quote: "From the back woods to the spotlight, Anna Nicole Smith is magic."

VIVARIN

www.vivarin.com

URL Encountered: We managed to guess it in a moment of sleepy desperation.

Atmosphere: Someone let some college kids loose with a copy of BBEdit and a corporate credit card.

What's the Point? Take a bunch of bizarre Generation-X-ish quizzes that all come to the same conclusion: no sensible person would ever be *sans Vivarin*.

Purchase: Fill out a form and whammo! Free Vivarin mailed to your doorstep!

Random Quote: "We're getting paid right this minute to create this Web site while you're staring at applications from places that spell "tasty" with two e's instead of a y."

APPLE JACKS CEREAL

www.applejacks.com

URL Encountered: Somehow, we wandered off the (very good and amusing) Kellogg's site.

What's the Point? Basically, the only thing here is a big list of "things that don't taste like apples." And yes, Apple Jacks *was* on the list.

TIDE DETERGENT

www.clothesline.com

URL Encountered: Seen on the dashboard of a stock car during auto race highlights on ESPN's *Sportscenter*.

Atmosphere: An idyllic suburban backyard where non-working mothers can spend their days worrying about the laundry while their husbands are hard at work at the office.

What's the Point? If you're obsessed

with laundry, you'll find it useful to download the seven-step procedure for removing cough syrup stains from colored lycra.

Purchase: There's no actual detergent for sale, but you can pick up the Automatic Downy Dispenser (Downy Ball) which time-releases fabric softener in the washload.

Random Quote: "30,000 socks were washed during the development of Tide with Bleach."

PRINGLES

www.pringles.com

Atmosphere: Dude, Pringles are a rad snack food that's even cool enough for snowboarders to eat.

What's the Point? Good question; very little actual information beyond

the fact "New techniques make Cheez Ums look even better without changing ingredients."

Purchase: Thankfully there's no online scam to have you purchase Pringles over the Net.

Random Quote: "And in Cincinatti *(sic)*, Pringles Newfangled Potato Chips are introduced in test market...The Gay 90's gentleman is used to project a feeling of cheerfulness and nostalgia."

THE BURST GUMS: CINN*A, FRUIT*A AND MINT*A

www.burstgum.com

URL Encountered: Banner ad.

Atmosphere: Jaws goes Gen X.

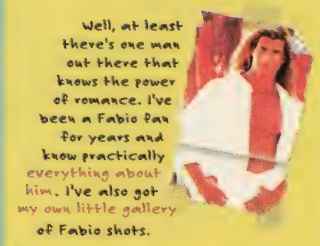
What's the Point? To reinforce the fact that Burst gums are the best-selling gums among teens by supplement-

ing product information with coverage of extreme sports and alternative music, the only two things teens care more about than flavor crystals.
Purchase: Nothing for sale, but there is a free video game that is to gaming what Boone's Farm is to wine.

Random Quote: "Research with gum chewers told us that what you were looking for was a gum made with today's users in mind."

HELLMAN'S REAL MAYONNAISE

(a.k.a. Best Foods Real Mayonnaise to our friends west of the Rockies)
www.mayo.com
URL Encountered: 1997 Daily Webpage Desk Calendar.

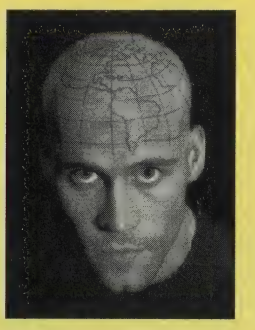


I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT BUTTER

www.tasteyoulove.com
URL Encountered: One morning while slathering the product on some toast.
Atmosphere: A romantic journal about love and margarine.
Purchase: I can't believe anyone would really purchase it, but there's a Fabio mousepad for sale for a mere $4.75.
What's the Point? I Can't Believe It's Not Butter is the first step to improving your love life.
Random Quote: "On March 15, the landscape of love changes forever when Fabio is born."

NAVIGATOR COLOGNE

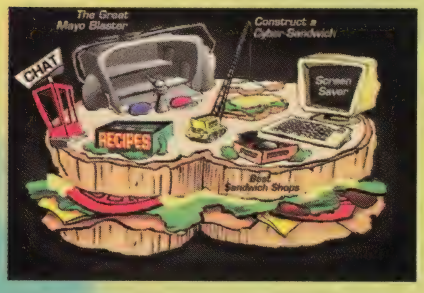
www.chartyourcourse.com
URL Encountered: Ad during online version of You Don't Know Jack.



Atmosphere: Michael Stipe doppelganger with a map tattooed on his head guides you through the darkest reaches of cyberspace.
Purchase: There's a $2 coupon for the cologne which expired 12/31/96.
What's the Point? To capitalize on Netscape's popularity.
Random Quote: "A man with control over his own direction is compelling and desirable. So is the fragrance of Navigator."

The Cheesy Sites

Atmosphere: The futuristic Planet Sandwich, an actual sandwich orbiting the Earth and inhabited by mayonnaise-loving folk.
What's the Point? To suggest that



mayonnaise improves the taste of any sandwich and to reassure the concerned public as a whole that "contrary to what Mom used to think, mayonnaise does not cause food poisoning."
Purchase: Fill out a form and you're promised coupons.
Random Quote: "Opened or unopened, commercial mayonnaise is microbiologically safe to eat for an indefinite period of time."

ZIMA

www.zima.com
URL Encountered: Ad banners back in the ancient days of the Web.
Atmosphere: An old fridge in the back of a basement full of skunked beer and old crusty condiments.
Purchase: There are some assorted Zima icons free for the taking.
What's the Point? To showcase what

passed as an interesting and dynamic Web site circa 1994.
Random Quote: "There are no plans to make a 'sugar-free' Zima."

SCHICK

www.schick.com
URL Encountered: TV commercial during NBA All-Star Game.

Atmosphere: Sleek and corporate, like a razor.
Purchase: No razors, just a free screen saver of that shaving woman from the TV commercials.
What's the Point? To provide consumers with loads of information about that shaving woman from the TV commercials.
Random Quote: "Another idea was to shave a baby's bottom since that's soft, tender skin, but again, this was too different from shaving the difficult neck and chin areas of a man's sensitive skin."

URBAN DECAY COSMETICS

www.urbandecay.com

Atmosphere: Dank, murky and vaguely dangerous cityscape; the navigational buttons are cockroaches.

What's So Good About It? With lip and nail colors like "bruise," "mildew" and "asphyxia," it's good to see some color samples. Bonus: quirky writing and truly cool links.

TWINKIES

www.twinkie.com

Atmosphere: Twinkie the Kid in a *Jetsons*esque atmosphere.

What's So Good About It? Somewhat spartan site gets our kudos for embracing the T.W.I.N.K.I.E.S. Project site rather than sending out the lawyers.

MARSHMALLOW FLUFF

www.marshmallow.com

Atmosphere: An all-American kitchen.

What's So Good About It? Contrary to what you might expect, there's not a whole lot of fluff here; just solid information, like recipes and the company history, the famed Fluffernutter theme and even the opportunity to order a case of Fluff.

QUISP CEREAL

www.quisp.com

Atmosphere: Out-of-sight, out-of-this-world quaziness.

What's So Good About It? It's just pretty cool that Quaker finally got hip to the fact that there's a huge audience for Quisp—even if it's only available in supermarkets in western New York state, Chicago and Milwaukee.

>> The Not-so-Cheesy Sites

JOE BOXER UNDERWEAR

www.joeboxer.com

Atmosphere: A funky carnival of silliness, with lots of people cavorting about in their boxers.

What's So Good About It? Between the poodles, strong men and juggling fools, this good-humored site will actually manage to psyche you up about buying undies.

OSCAR-MAYER

www.oscar-mayer.com

Atmosphere: A weineriffic multiplex.

What's So Good About It? Among

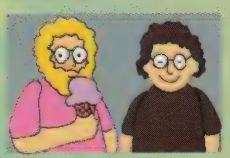
other goodies, there's an interactive tour of the Weinermobile and a .wav file of the bologna song.

BEN & JERRY'S ICE CREAM

www.benjerry.com

Atmosphere: Caloric.

What's So Good About It? No stone is left unturned. Find out where to pick up a pint in Ireland or Israel, preview new flavors or visit the flavor graveyard, the final resting place of failed flavors like Tennessee Mud.

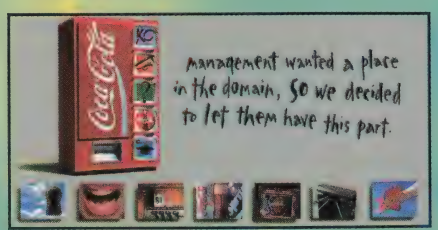


COCA-COLA

www.cocacola.com

Atmosphere: A giant vending machine filled with endless surprises.

What's So Good About It? A potpourri of carbonated treats including memorabilia classifieds, an online exhibit of international Coke bottle art and a



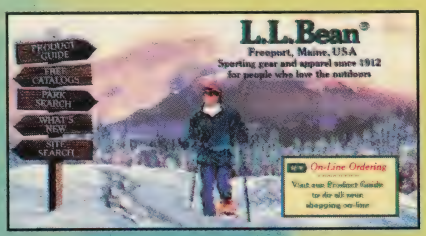
semi-addictive Shockwave bowling game substituting Coke bottles for pins.

L.L. BEAN

www.llbean.com

Atmosphere: A crisp afternoon in the great outdoors.

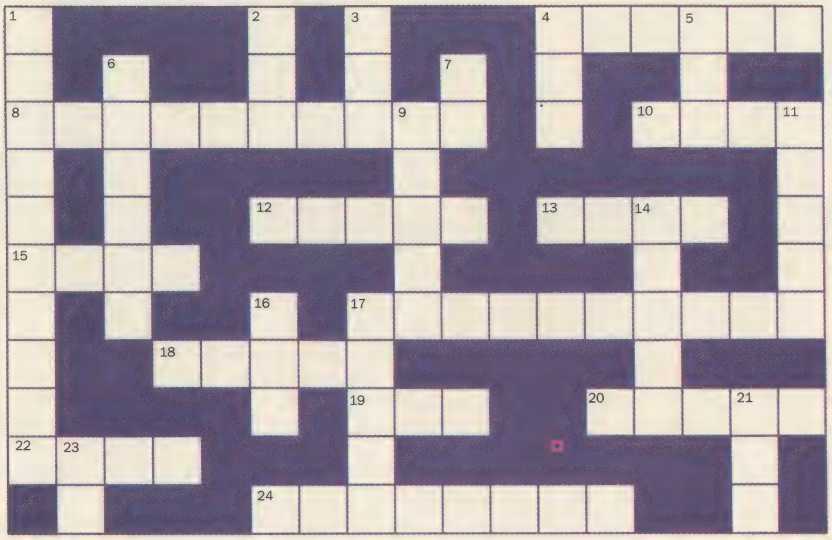
What's So Good About It? In addition



to the entire catalog online, there's loads of outdoors information, including a park search engine and outdoors advice.

"AHH THE SUPERHIGHWAY!
I DRIVE, SHE NAVIGATES."
www.yil.com
YOU'VE SEEN THE MAGAZINE, NOW TRY OUR WEB SITE
Surf School Tools and tips to help you tame the Net.
Incredibly Useful Site of the Day The Web can make your life easier, if you know where to look.
Daily Double Scoop Just enough Net news and gossip.
Weekly Columnists Our cyberscribes share their insight into how the Net inspires and infuriates.
YAHOO!
Internet Life

CROSSWORD



DOWN

1 After http:
2 "I shall return."
3 The ISP we love to hate.
4 The law bent on making the Net a happy,shining, G-rated, kiddie-land.
5 Point-to-point protocol, or what you do after a 64 oz. Super-Mega-Gulp.
6 A wide-eyed, annoyingly uninformed user.
7 Windows, DOS, System 7 and Unix are examples of one.
9 Someone who thinks he or she is KeWL, but is totally unKeWL.
11 Device which performs modulation/ demodulation functions.
14 May put an end to your hard drive's "Good Times."
16 _____/IP, THE network protocol.
17 That squiggly little line.
21 _____.arts.movies.reviews
23 Not real, not stupid.

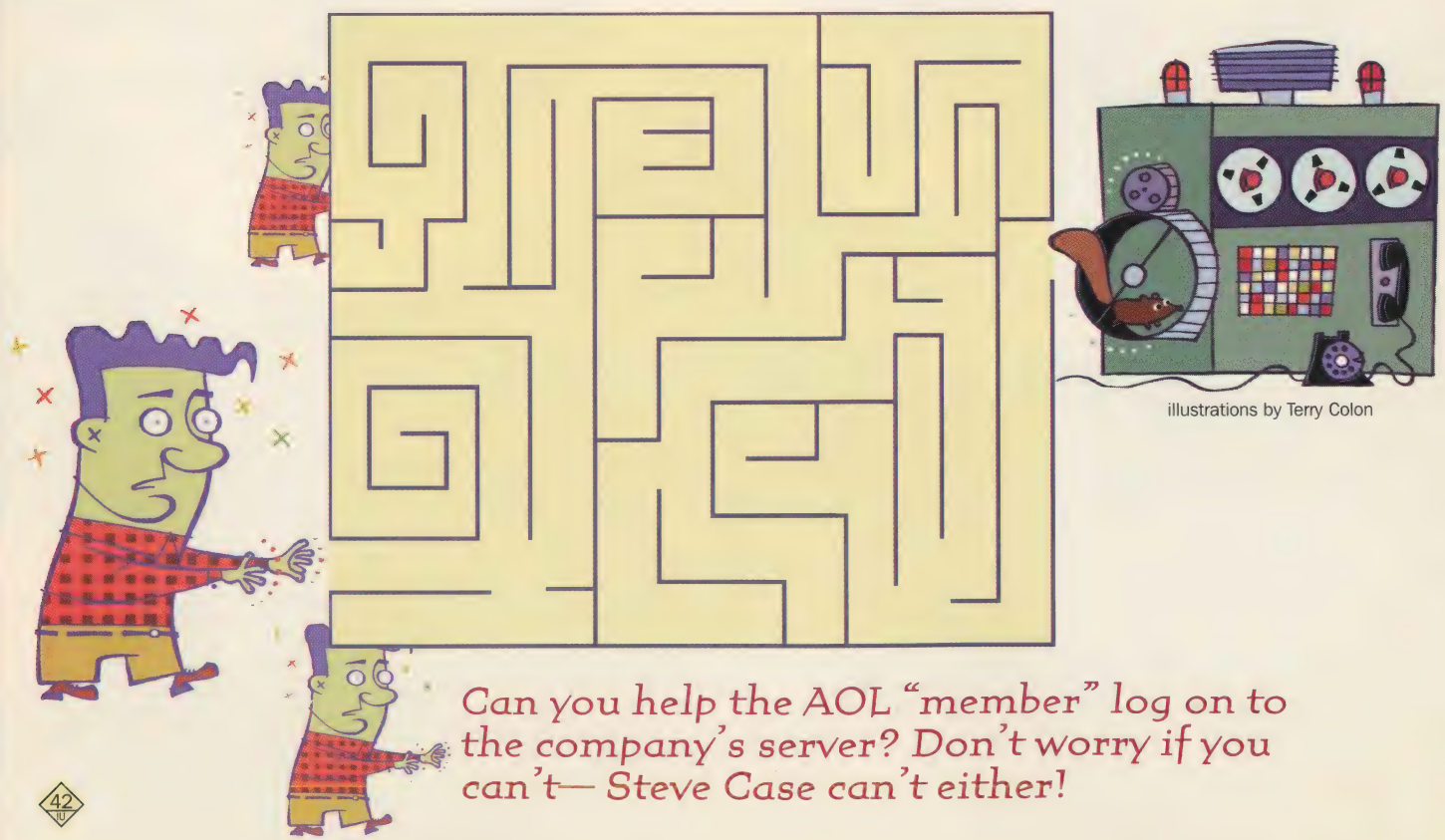
ACROSS

4 Having to do with the process of making a message difficult to decipher.
8 First Mr. T, then everybody else...
10 "I do not like it with my Froot-Loops, I do not like it in my newsgroups."
12 Someone who trolls a newsgroup is hot for a _____.
13 Caffeinated Web page pick-me-up.
15 Network protocol mostly replaced by 5 down, or an undergarment.
17 The premier place for a cup of coffee online.
18 _____ art, the cave paintings of the Internet.
19 The bane of all real-time Net events.
20 America Online likes to call them "members."
22 To write code—or bad books.
24 Witty, stupid, even numerical, a must for e-mail.

Done already? You (8 across)!

Stuck on THAT one?! What a (6 down) (9 down)!

Looking for the answers to all the puzzles? Head for www.underground-online.com/online/puzzle.htm



illustrations by Terry Colon

Can you help the AOL "member" log on to the company's server? Don't worry if you can't— Steve Case can't either!

Jumbler

Unscramble these four jumblers, one letter in each square, to form four ordinary words.

XEMOI

RINTA

NKUKS

ENTOD

Now arrange the circled letters to form the answer to the caption and cartoon above:

WHAT THE OFFICE WORKER DIDN'T WANT HIS BOSS TO SEE ON HIS MONITOR

Connect the Dots

To uncover America's most beloved processed meat, and the Net's most despised violation of Netiquette.

TEST EMPORIU
the Test Emporium. This is the largest
ardized testing site on the Web!
0101010101
0101010101
0101010101
0101010101
0101010101
COURSE DESCRIPTION
MATH 101
HISTORY 101
SCIENCE 101
ENGLISH 101

Several sites on the Web are proving wrong the old adage, because on the Net...

CHEATERS DO PROSPER

The Trail of Tears

Was it unjust and inhumane? What happened to the Cherokee during that long and treacherous journey? They were brave and...

[*Editor's note:* Wait a second. What does it have to do with the Internet? This sounds more like the beginning of a bad high school history paper.]

[*Author's note:* Right. Umm, OK. Sorry. Here goes again.]

I understand that some students that have already graduated from college are having a bit of trouble getting their new businesses started. I know of a tool that will be extremely helpful and is already available to them: the Internet.

[*Editor's note:* Stop right there! I wrote that intro on a paper back in college. I remember because I stayed up all night drinking Jolt Cola, listening to Anthrax and pricking myself with pins.]

[*Author's note:* That explains the punctuation errors.]

[*Editor's note:* Listen, wise guy, I got a B+ on that masterpiece. Where did you get that intro from, anyway?]

[*Author's note:* I downloaded the Trail of Tears paragraph from the School Sucks Web site and the Internet one from the Evil House of Cheat, just two of the many Web sites that have copies of recycled research papers. You want something else? Maybe a biology report on Huntington's Disease? A creative-writing story about renovating a palazzo? A law study of *Marbury vs. Madison*?]

[*Editor's note:* Look, just write the story you were assigned to do—in your own words.]

By Steve Knopper

ART BY LARRY BURKE-WEINER

Kenny Sahr gets an A+ for rationalization. He says his Web page—**www.schoolsucks.com**, one of many term-paper-trading resources on the Internet—isn't simply a seedy den for student cheaters. It's a detailed critique of the world's school systems. The term papers he posts, which many students simply download and turn in, aren't the problem. They're a symptom.

"This site is not about plagiarism," says Sahr, a fast-talking 25-year-old who has been running School Sucks for more than a year. "One of the arguments I get from professors is 'These papers suck.' My attitude is, these papers are reflective of the students of the world. How dare (professors) say that? I absolutely reject that. Any professor who thinks the papers suck should go learn how to teach."

See the logic? The papers are horribly written, and yet students can turn them in and, occasionally, get good grades. Therefore, it's the school system's fault. Sahr continues to rant: The tenure system encourages lazy teachers; communications classes are archaic; professors without even a minor in education are bad for colleges; athletes zip by in easy classes while professors look the other way. "There is something really wrong going on here," he says. "This education system is a farce."

Because School Sucks has a catchy name and a controversial reputation, Sahr has been rewarded with a media pulpit from which he can spread his views. Since last June, the Miami resident and former Israeli soldier says he has done over 300 interviews for stories in publications such as the *Washington Post Online*, *Newsweek Online*, the *Detroit News* and *People*. His overriding purpose, he says, is not to profit from the black-market term-paper trade. It's to draw attention to his arguments about the educational system.

Presented with Sahr's line of reasoning, Northwestern University computer science professor Joseph Walther pauses briefly, before erupting in loud, sincere laughter for several seconds. "I don't think we have a mediocre educational system at the institution of my current employ," he says.

"I've looked at one of those (term paper) sites," Walther says. "It worried me when I first heard about it and then I looked at the quality of the papers there and I'm not worried anymore. Anyone who turns in a paper like that would not pass my class."

Most students are inclined not to cheat, says Donald G. Marshall, head of the English department at the University of Illinois-Chicago. (Notably, UIC was recently listed along with Harvard University and the University of Texas on School Sucks' list of "Slacker Schools of the Week." This is apparently based on Sahr's informal poll of his site's paper traders.) "This is sort of 'Dog bites man'—the real story is that the millions of students who could cheat don't," Marshall says. "A tiny fraction cheat. People love to exaggerate things, but most people are honest.

"I understand, being a human being, substituting the wrong goal for the real goal. There's always somebody in society who's exploiting people's weaknesses and trying to make money out of it. That's something they do cold-bloodedly in their own interests. It's kind of a cynical exploitation of a student's weaknesses. That's really reprehensible. That's really evil."

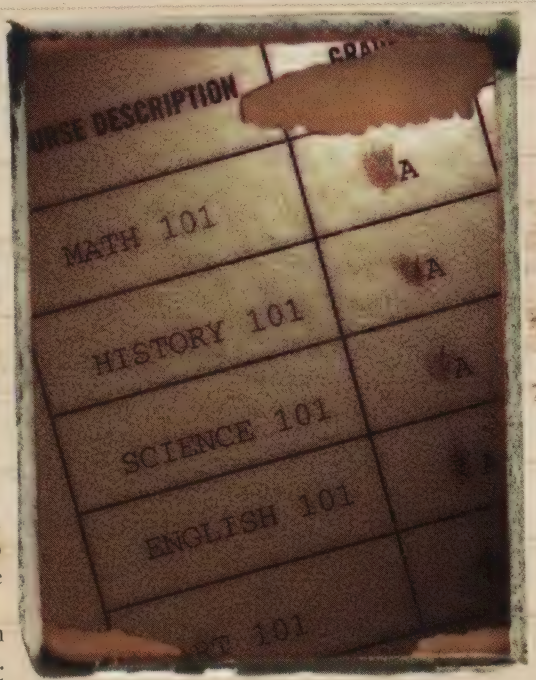
For as long as there have been colleges, there have been services for lazy or struggling students to buy prewritten term papers. If professors had the power to do anything about them, those long-running "TERM PAPER BLUES?" ads at the back of *Rolling Stone* would have disappeared long ago. But the Internet has made shady transactions so much easier. Plug "term papers" into Yahoo! and more than a dozen working Web addresses for paper-trading sites come up.

It's hard to tell, on the surface, which of these sites profit from students' cheat money and which simply help frustrated paper-writers come up with

"This site is not about plagiarism...Any professor who thinks the papers suck should go learn how to teach." —Kenny Sahr, School Sucks

ideas and hard-to-find documents. Almost every site contains a disclaimer: "For research or informational purposes only." Technically, this means you can't turn in a paper for class credit. In practice, on the Internet, the agreement carries as much weight as "Stop! You must be 18 or older to proceed."

There are for-profit sites, such as the Term Paper Warehouse (**www.termpaperwarehouse.com/tpw/**), which charges $6.50 a page for prewritten papers on "How to Change Your Oil" or "The Declining Power of Europe." There are free sites with a hidden agenda, like Sahr's. And there are free sites run by actual students, including the pseudonymous 17-year-old San Jose, Calif., resident "Steve Case," who started his page (**www.mbay.net/~td3512/**) with friends' term-paper donations. "It is a free country," he says. "People can do what they like with them."



School Sucks, thanks to Sahr's uncanny ability to promote himself through the national media, is the most prominent "cheating" site. "I answer every e-mail I get from professors—well over 500. I'm probably misnumbering it by thousands," Sahr says. "A lot of times they call up yelling and screaming...I explain to them the reasons for this site and they understand.

"The letters we get from the students are gems. They're so funny. First of all, they think we'll send anything to them. We'll get 10 messages a day saying 'I need a paper on...' All these Beavises and Butt-heads out there saying, 'Anything on math. Please! I can't do math!' You can almost see the desperation."

Sahr, who also hawks a rock tape-trading network and his Israeli travel book on the page, hopes to incorporate his musings about School Sucks into a second book. But recently his competitors have started to pay attention to his self-promotional reputation: "Schoolsucks.com sucks up to the media so much...it just bugs me," says Jonathan Bagot, an 18-year-old college student who runs the year-old Term Paper Emporium (**cygnus.rsabbs.com/~jbagot/**). And Peter Revson, managing research consultant of the more reputable High Performance Papers (**www.execpc.com/~hppapers**), says Sahr's true purpose is to just "elicit ads."

Revson's six-year-old company, owned by two attorneys and based just south of Milwaukee, is in a tricky position. High Performance Papers makes decent money—of the Web page's 600 hits a day, Revson says, 60 become paid orders—providing what the company terms "Professionally Prepared Research Documents." He says his clients are professionals who can't write; foreign students who need help finding English-language research; and rural residents whose local libraries have sparse resources. Almost nobody, he says, has ever tried to buy one of the company's documents and turn it in for class credit.

Yet High Performance Papers still fights the negative perception created by School Sucks or the Evil House of Cheat. Revson says such sites "give the industry a bad name."

Revson has talked a few times with Jens Schriver, a 19-year-old Copenhagen, Denmark, student who has been running the Evil House of Cheat (**www.CheatHouse.com**) for more than two years. He says he can't fault Schriver for wanting to make a few bucks. (For the record, Schriver defends his site's holy purposes, too: "It's a library. A research center. In that light, it is something very positive.")

But Revson says the title "Evil House of Cheat"—not to mention a huge ad banner for a phone-sex page, displayed prominently at the top of the site—doesn't exactly help the site's image as a research foundation. Schriver says he would never consider changing the site's name. "Who would be interested?" he asks. "It's an eye-catcher. If it wasn't a bit provocative, it would just seem boring."

In the end, Schriver admits, money is "the main reason it is still up. I wouldn't do it if I lost money on it."

Though Revson says some states have laws pre-

"This is sort of 'Dog bites man'—the real story is that the millions of students who could cheat don't."

—Donald Marshall, head of UIC's English department

I will not cheat

I will not cheat

venting second-hand term paper distribution, there's certainly nothing illegal about them on the Internet. Still, many fed-up advocates of honest education—not to mention people out to make a few bucks—have been trying to steer desperate students from cheating pages to more positive study pages. Infonautics, the Wayne, Pa., company best known for its Electric Library media database (**www.elibrary.com**), even took the unusual step of advertising its homework-helper page (**www.researchpaper.com**) on School Sucks.

Researchpaper.com is "Gallant" to School Sucks' "Goofus." Its search engines scour dozens of the Electric Library's newspapers and magazines, including *Newsday* and the *Los Angeles Times*, for matching articles. There's a chat room, a writing center with tips on grammar and conciseness, and a directory of topic ideas. So it's not surprising that Tom Damico, the company's business development manager, says he's "100 percent against" School Sucks and its founder's values.

"Does our ad on Schoolsucks.com give it credibility and make it legit?" Damico asks. "I really don't think it does. Our ad is such dirt-cheap advertising, it's not going to make it worthwhile for anybody. We think [School Sucks] is definitely getting a lot of eyeballs by students interested in the concept," Damico says. "But I'm guessing that the great majority of students would never cheat or take advantage of these sites...The fact remains: You've got to write a research paper. Why don't you come to our site? It's really letting people take advantage of the Internet."

In conclusion, then, the Cherokee survived the hardships of the Trail of Tears and the loss of their loved ones and all that belonged to them. Their population continues to grow inspite of the immense...

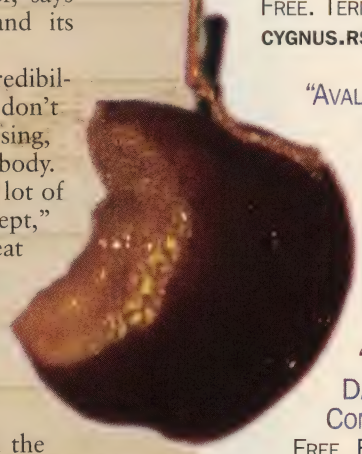
[*Editor's note:* Hold it, hold it. "Inspite of?" And what's with the Cherokees again?]

[*Author's note:* I couldn't think of an ending, so I took a quick spin back to School Sucks. Much easier that way! It was either the Cherokees or that palazzo renovation. What is a palazzo anyway?]

[*Editor's note:* Listen, I'm sick of this. Just end this story in your own words or I'll download your paycheck from the School Sucks page.]

Sahr, who with a partner runs an Internet content marketing company called Moonstone, is frank about his secondary motives. Yes, he says, he would like to make money off School Sucks. And while his growing media profile hasn't set off an avalanche of new business, it hasn't hurt business either. But money isn't the bottom line, Sahr says: "My concerns are the concerns of my students. Just by having the papers out there, it's keeping the professors on their toes."

Responds Marshall, the UIC's English department head: "The odor of rationalization is just all over that." Q



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FREE. SCHOOL SUCKS,
WWW.SCHOOLSUCKS.COM

"CHAUCER: THE IMPORTANCE OF FATE INFLUENCES FREE WILL."
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CYGNUS.RSABBS.COM/~JBAGOT/

"AVALON, OZZIE AND HARRIET."
$71.50. TERM PAPER WAREHOUSE.

"JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN AMERICA AND ITS CAUSES."
FREE. EVIL HOUSE OF CHEAT,
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"*SHOWGIRLS* AND PRESENT DAY GENDER ROLE CONSTRUCTION."
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"SERIAL KILLERS."
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"ATLANTIS: WE WILL NEVER KNOW."
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"GALILEO'S NUNCIUS SIDENIUS."
$53.70. A-1 TERMPAPERS.

"PREFERENTIAL HIRING."
FREE. TERM PAPER EMPORIUM.

"PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND DISEASE."
FREE. EVIL HOUSE OF CHEAT.
—*SK*

Planning the First Virtual World's Fair

by Charles Platt

Friday afternoon

I'm sitting in the San Antonio Hilton, wondering what the hell I will say to the local mayor when he comes here tonight to meet 11 so-called futurists, one of them being me. "Futurist" is a label that any Net journalist may find himself wearing once in a while, and usually it entails nothing more strenuous than making vague predictions for an hour or so in front of an audience at a trade show. This gig is very different: I'm being paid to spend a long weekend helping to develop workable concepts for a "virtual world's fair" to be held in San Antonio as a tourist attraction in 2001.

A *virtual* world's fair? What can this possibly mean? If it's virtual, how can it be located somewhere, and how can it attract tourists? If we run a bunch of T3s into the local convention center and dump 10,000 terminals on white-clothed tables with pleated skirts around the edges, will this tempt vacationers to cancel their plans to visit Vegas?

It all seems hopelessly impractical, probably because the "virtual" buzz word was imposed by organizers who want to seem cutting-edge without understanding what virtuality is all about. In fact, when I received my e-mailed invitation to the planning weekend I assumed that this was just another half-baked attempt to exploit the Net by a small group of opportunists who would fade back into obscurity as soon as their money ran out, and my only question was whether their bank account would stay open long enough for my honorarium check to clear.

But now that I'm actually here in San Antonio, I find that the fair is being taken extremely seriously. The local newspaper has given it front-page coverage in its Sunday edition, many businesses have pledged their support, our two-day planning session alone will cost $150,000, and US West is picking up the tab. San Antonio may sound provincial, but it's the ninth largest city in the United States, and people here want a fair to reignite their sputtering economy—the same

Illustration by Sacha Eckes

BUENOS DIAS
GOOD AFTERNOON
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way it happened when they hosted a traditional-style world's fair back in 1968. Two of its quaintly modernistic structures are visible from my hotel window: a rotunda like a Jell-O mold, and a skinny concrete observation tower with a circular restaurant on top.

Tonight we futurists will be welcomed by the mayor, and then we will have a mere 24 hours to develop workable concepts that we must present at 5 p.m. tomorrow to a large audience of local notables. This makes me very nervous indeed, because everyone's expectations seem wildly unrealistic, and when people expect a lot, they are liable to get pissed when things don't work out. And the more I think about it, the more convinced I am that things will *not* work out because this will be a wacky idea no matter what we try to do with it, and it certainly isn't going to make money.

Friday evening

The mayor, William E. Thornton, comes across as a real nice guy who cares about his community. He poses for photographs, hands out his business card, offers some platitudes about the information age, then runs off to another civic function, leaving the futurists to start work.

Our team leader is Arnold Wasserman, formerly vice president of design for NCR and Xerox, currently heading the Innovation Strategy Division of IDEO, a multimedia and

interface design company. He explains that the fair should be a cross-cultural event encompassing "the Americas," because San Antonio's population is 51 percent Hispanic and the city prides itself on racial harmony. With this in mind, four of the futurists have been invited from locations south of the border. (None from Canada, presumably because it's so far from Texas, it doesn't count.)

A woman mathematician who specializes in Boolean logic at a university in Mexico stands up and advocates a "virtual window" on art treasures in her homeland. The vice president of a company in Panama hopes that the fair can catalyze growth of communications infrastructure in Latin countries. A physicist and director of an institute for advanced study in Chile sounds a more profound note, telling us that we need a theme "important enough to die for."

Wasserman likes this last statement a lot. He isn't very interested in practical issues and prefers to talk about values and vision. A theme important enough to die for! Surely, if we can come up with that, the logistics will take care of themselves.

Well, maybe so, but I'm a skeptic by nature, I think more like an engineer than a philosopher, and I want to know how things are going to work. Consequently, when I return to my room at 10 p.m., I spend an hour trying to formulate ideas that satisfy *my* expectations. Three come to mind:

Telerobotics. In San Antonio, we could have a robot arm fitted with a lifelike jointed hand, mimicking the motions of a data glove in Argentina or Peru. We would also have a duplicate robot arm in the remote location, and a duplicate data glove here. Now "handshaking protocol" takes on a whole new meaning as visitors have the real-time experience of clasping the palm of some unknown foreigner, creating the perfect metaphor for (you guessed it) international goodwill.

Multinational folk-music database. Since most folk music tends to fall somewhere between tiresome and excruciating, let's forget the usual model of virtuosos dressing up in silly clothes and subjecting an audience to interminable recitals on primitive stringed instruments. Let's put folk music back into the hands of the folk, no matter how untalented they happen to be, and give the audience veto power. Anyone should be able to upload a minute or two of music to the fair's Web site, along with a self-photo and perhaps an appropriately solemn statement of purpose and belief. Fair visitors can then audition these multinational samples, keeping one finger on the fast-forward button. Web browsers will be allowed limited access from outside the fair, thus promoting the event and encouraging people to attend in person.

Face-to-face communication. Patrizio, somewhere in Mexico, says *"¡Buenas tardes!"* Speech recognition software converts his words into plaintext which is autotranslated into English and appears as a subtitle reading "Good afternoon!" beneath his face on a screen in San Antonio. A visitor at the fair speaks a reply that goes back through the translation process, thus initiating an exciting adventure in bilingual audiovisual communication. Here again, offsite Web browsers would be able to eavesdrop in order to promote the fair.

I like this last scenario because it reflects the free spirit of the Net. People should be allowed to say literally anything, including obscene comments or racist epithets, if that's what they want. This would provide a welcome break from the typical world's fair vision of blissed-out global harmony which downgrades individuals to the status of undifferentiated drones humming along in unison. The Net has already shown us something much healthier: a diverse assortment of spirited people who clash freely and enjoy the experience. I'm not sure if this is a theme worth dying for, but it seems worthwhile to me.

Saturday

Under Wasserman's benevolent, nurturing guidance, we spew out more than 60 ideas, which he summarizes using a felt-tip marker on poster-sized sheets that are taped to the walls of our hotel meeting room. This makes everyone feel good because it creates the impression that our thoughts are important and we're doing a lot of work.

Then we split into smaller groups to develop full-fledged scenarios, and no one even glances at the sheets on the wall anymore.

We all agree that there has to be a compromise: to satisfy the material needs of San Antonio, this fair cannot be entirely virtual. It will have to be a theme park with virtual add-ons. I propose a 20-acre site shaped like the North and South American continents, with scaled replicas of key

features and live video links to actual countries where locals can participate in the auto-translated online chat.

Other suggestions include wiring each attendee with a cellular phone; building a giant glass prism to serve as an architectural centerpiece (which every world's fair seems to need); giving attendees global positioning devices so they always know where they are; and using robot rovers or humans toting video cameras to transmit random scenes of everyday life from other countries to screens at the fair, so that we can all be virtual tourists. There's also a lot of talk about biculturalism, education and the arts.

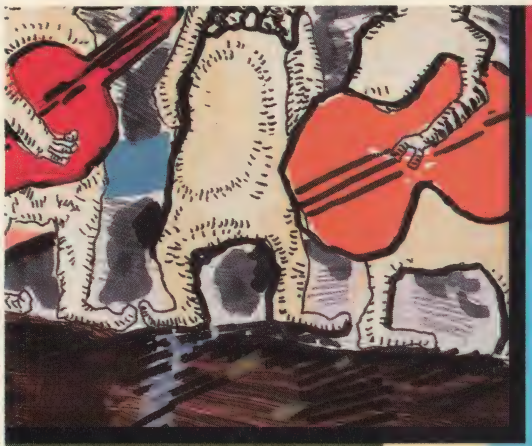
At 5 p.m. we make our presentations to San Antonio dignitaries, and to my astonishment and relief, they're enthusiastic. I guess they figure that whatever we do, it can't *hurt* their economy, and they'll acquire some nifty high-speed data links and a load of computer equipment that can be moved into local schools after the fair ends.

I find my skepticism wavering. I like the idea of spontaneous video chats, glimpses of life in other lands, and people learning about each other without guidance or censorship.

Maybe this turkey can fly after all.

Sunday morning

We finalize our proposals, refining the ideas and adding new ones, such as a system of advance reservations that will eliminate the need to wait in line for exhibits or rides. Cell phones and global positioning devices would be impractical, but people can be loaned pagers that will remind them when to turn up for their reserved seats and will also allow parents to locate their kids at any time.



Visitors in search of romance can register with an intranet dating service that will enable instant meetings inside the fairgrounds. We can offer worldwide searches for previous fair visitors who share special interests. Schools can sponsor pre-fair get-acquainted cross-cultural hookups with kids in other countries.

Will it happen? At lunch I notice the architect of the 1968 observation tower huddling with two principals from Economics Research Associates, a consultancy company that has provided business advice for more than a dozen fairs around the globe. They're discussing admission fees, which sounds pretty serious to me.

Sunday evening

Alas, when I get on the plane out of San Antonio, the optimism wears off. I now believe that we've been fooling ourselves, because the instant we moved this concept partially out of cyberspace it incurred a huge need for investment in buildings and hardware. This can only be financed by civic and corporate spon-

sors, which means that dozens or hundreds of committees and bureaucrats will want to do what they always do: minimize risk. Almost certainly this will mean reining in creativity and designing a safe, bland, sanitized family event.

It's easy to see how fair planners will react when they understand the implications of online chat. Like America Online or the government of Singapore, they'll want filtering software to block obscene speech and racial slurs, and maybe some decency patrols to interrupt any video transmission containing nudity. Even random scenes from other cultures will be censored, because world's fairs always present a dishonestly positive view of participating nations. Peru, for instance, will be depicted as a land of mystery where Inca temples lurk amid exotic rain forests. There'll be no mention of forests being decimated, cities choked with slums caused by uncontrolled population growth (sanctioned by the Catholic church), and political dissidents being jailed by the government.

Likewise, in the United States, we won't be allowed to view inner-city neighborhoods with liquor stores being robbed, addicts shooting up and hookers servicing customers in parked cars. There'll be no hint of gunship diplomacy, huge arsenals of nuclear and biological weapons, and vets suffering Gulf War Syndrome. And we certainly won't see our elected representatives awarding themselves pay raises, launching filibusters and passing amendments to benefit special interest groups that have made substantial campaign contributions.

Controversial topics such as these are commonly aired online, where technology has given every citizen an equal voice and free speech means exactly what it says. But the typical world's fair is a paternalistic vent feeding platitudes to a passive audience, and I see no reason why San Antonio should stray very far from this paradigm.

Consequently, as the fair moves through its planning stages, I expect the "virtual" content to be pared down. This may be a wise business decision because high-tech gimmicks are not just risky, but expensive. On the other hand, devirtualizing the fair will remove its unique selling point, which will create a need for a substitute theme. I have given this a lot of thought, and with all due modesty, I now offer a proposal.

When the previous San Antonio fair was being planned back in the mid-1960s, I'm told that the organizers tried to come up with a centerpiece to attract global attention. Someone suggested a classically Texan exhibit which would simply be the world's largest heap of gold. A truly massive display of coins, jewelry, and ingots would surely lure admirers from around the globe, just as the Crown Jewels are a perpetual tourist magnet at Britain's Tower of London.

The 1968 fair never used this concept, but I believe the time is now right. A heap-o'-gold exhibit certainly isn't very virtual; in fact, it's about as nonvirtual as you can get. But a massive display of bullion actually would satisfy the most exalted, visionary ideal that we talked about: For many people, it would be something important enough to die for.

As for those nerdier, less materialistic folk who would have been more interested in remote sensing and video chat—well, those options should be available on our own computers by 2001. The idea of moving one's physical body to a distant location in order to see and learn has already become blessedly obsolete. In 2001, even more than today, virtuality will begin—and end—at home.

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by Richard Greenfield

Contrabandwidth

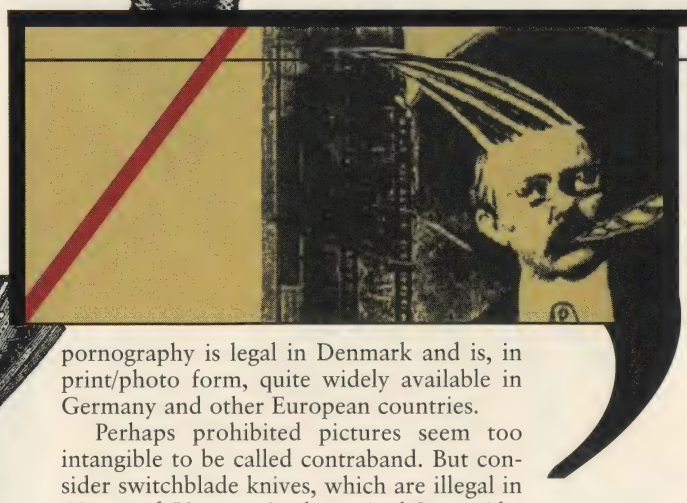
Net Commerce is coming, and it's arriving at a desktop, laptop, palmtop, even a WebTV near you.

Unstated and unexamined amidst all the hoopla and the dozens of companies pouring money into secure ways of transmitting credit card numbers and other financial data over the Net is that there is Net commerce that thrives in the light of day, and Net commerce that occurs in the shadows. And where and how those shadows fall is, right now, no more and no less an accident of geography.

Consider some examples: a calendar with pictures of Fabio, he of romance novel cover hunkdom. In the United States, Europe and most of Asia, the item is innocuous enough to be sold next to greeting cards.

In Iran though, the calendar is contraband.

If that example seems too extreme, consider a suite of laws passed by the German Bundestag late last year. The laws deal not only with "hate speech," but also with obscenity and even with Internet commerce. In the hands of ambitious prosecutors, *Playboy* and *Penthouse* calendars could become contraband if offered on the Web, even though the same magazines are quite legally sold at almost every newsstand in Germany! That is not a farfetched example. For more than a year, German prosecutors have been looking into a group of sex-oriented newsgroups on Usenet, ostensibly because of child pornography. But child pornography is legal in Denmark and is, in print/photo form, quite widely available in Germany and other European countries.



One country's commerce *is another country's* contraband.

Perhaps prohibited pictures seem too intangible to be called contraband. But consider switchblade knives, which are illegal in 49 out of 50 states in the United States (the exception is Oregon) unless you're in the military or work with a police force and can fill out a disclosure form. In that case, it might interest you to know that there are some very esteemed U.S. knife manufacturers making fine switchblade knives. The law

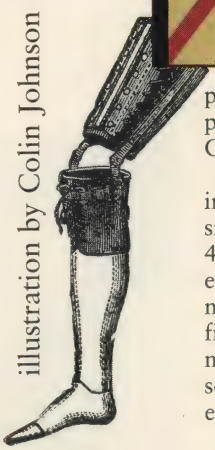


illustration by Colin Johnson

against switchblade knives, often referred to as the "Sullivan Law," goes back to the 1920s and may seem very quaint in an era when schoolchildren are caught with Glocks and Uzis and Tec-9s. But it's still the law—in the United States. Germany has no such law, neither does Italy, nor the Netherlands. If you wander around the Web, you're likely to find several sites in other countries that offer switchblade knives (sometimes called "automatic knives") that don't require you to be serving in the police or the military in order to buy.

Of course, it's illegal to order a switchblade knife from overseas and have it shipped back to you in the United States, just as it is illegal to order or ship a Fabio calendar into Iran, and could be illegal to send *Playboy* calendars to Germany. In the global economy, even in cyberspace, one country's commerce is another country's contraband.

Switchblades are, in the scheme of things, not of major importance, although the ability to buy and sell other weapons online may be more significant. There are two rallying cries that are used by the foes of the free dissemination of information, in whatever form, online: pornography, particularly child pornography, and drugs, particularly illicit drugs.

It's beyond the scope of any one article to delve into all the various forms of adult-oriented entertainment, some of which would surely be seen as pornographic by proponents of the Communications Decency Act in the United States and the measures passed by the German Bundestag and all other attempts to regulate content.

Even the phrase "child pornography" carries a loaded emotional weight. Such acts, are, by definition, criminal in most countries—although, as mentioned before, the possession of

images of the acts is not universally forbidden. That already places would-be censors in a thoroughly untenable position. Since one of the countries where such material is allowed is a staunch ally of the United States and a mainstream part of Europe, what is to be done if some entrepreneur sets up a server there (if someone has not done so already) to make images available for downloading? By current laws, absent the Communications Decency Act or any of its European cousin-in-laws, the mere possession of such images constitutes a felony. That is, not their further transmission within the United States (that's another felony), but their mere res-

idence on John Q. Citizen's hard drive. This material has been treated as so evil, so offensive, that some of the very basis of the 4th Amendment, to say nothing of the idea of personal use, has been jettisoned in favor of blanket prohibition.

It gets worse. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that depictions of sex acts between children and adults are indeed so pernicious that exceptions to the Constitution must be made to eradicate them, the fact is that the definitions of child pornography are often extended to cover anyone who is under the age of consent. The problem, then, is that there is no uniform age of consent for sex or marriage in the 50 states of the United States, nor, for that matter, in the European Economic Community or in Asia. All of this is not meant to suggest that there is not child pornography, whether of the prepubescent kind or featuring teenagers, available online. There are adult-oriented Web sites that proudly boast of pictures of teens, some in cheerleader uniforms doing several varieties of splits not generally seen at football games. Such sites usually carry a stipulation that all models seen within are at least 18 years old (and, in the interests of truth in advertising 18 and 19 are still teenage years). Other material is available on the alt.sex newsgroups on Usenet and still more is available through certain restricted IRC channels on the UnderNet saw, while perusing a list of channels on the UnderNet portion of IRC, a channel whose slugline read as follows: "Nude Pictures of Teenage Girls Taken by Their Stepfathers." It's so offensive, it almost reads as a severe parody of censor-happy bureaucrats. It may, however, not be a joke at all. And if it is not, it plays directly into the hands of those who wish to throttle the free exchange of information. It would be very hard, under even the most liberal interpretation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution or the laws of free expression of any country to find a rationale to cover what such a channel purports to be doing, and very easy to find a multitude of laws that such a group could be charged with breaking.

And that is just the point: the tools are already in place. We do not need any new laws to cover them. It is the passing of new laws and their over-broad application by ambitious prosecutors that poses far more of a threat to any society than do the actions of a handful of sexual predators. Anyone who doubts this can review the recent case of Nicholas Bissell, the New Jersey prosecutor who was convicted of extortion and racketeering and went on the lam for a week before killing himself in a Nevada motel room. Right now, the attorney general of the state of New Jersey is reviewing every conviction obtained by Bissell because it's known that in several cases, he acted through or with associates to obtain forfeited property at extremely advantageous prices. And he was able to do so because he had a reputation as a tough "law and order" prosecutor and because New Jersey's forfeiture laws allowed it.

The Bissell case does not only highlight the danger of overzealous prosecution, but also the other rallying cry of those who oppose the free flow of Internet information: drugs. Drugs online. And lest anyone be unclear about this, there are drugs online. Check into the **alt.drugs** newsgroup, or **rec.drugs.announce**, **rec.drugs.misc**, **rec.drugs.psychedelic** and you will find questions and answers, recipes and occasional postings like one from a user in Amsterdam who offered to help anyone who wanted to obtain "products that it is difficult for you to obtain at home." It is safe to assume he did not mean Dutch chocolate. Whether anyone took him up on the offer is probably something that cannot be determined. But if they didn't the first time, someone will next time.

Within days after California and Arizona voted to decriminalize marijuana in last November's elections, a Web site went up in the Bay Area to promote the sale of, and to potentially take orders, for cannabis products. Assuming that both states prevail in the public battle with the federal authorities over the propositions, will other states arrest citizens for ordering from California or Arizona? Will Oregon and Nevada have drug-sniffing dogs at their borders? Will all outbound mail from California and Arizona be checked by postal workers in each of the other 48 states, to say nothing of all the other countries in the world where such restrictions are still in force? And will all Internet Service Providers, in the United States as well as throughout Europe and Asia (excluding Holland), be required to block or

keep under surveillance all sites in those two states that would offer substances that would then be legal under their laws? Who would build and maintain such a Cyber Berlin Wall, and who on Earth would want to pay for it?

Perhaps this is also too extreme an example, for the court cases on these state propositions could well last into the next century. There are other, easier and just as current examples to explore. The United States is currently looking into banning GHB, normally sold as a supplement at health food stores, because it is allegedly the "new" date rape drug.

There are sites on the Web where GHB can be obtained from outside the United State, its possession not being completely illegal as yet. However, in the middle of last year, the United States made illegal the possession of Rophynol, a chemical cousin to Valium that is available in over 60 countries worldwide, including Mexico. This drug, a strong sedative, had never been licensed or approved for sale in the United States, though there are drugs as powerful that are available here. The immediately stated reason was that the drug was implicated in several alleged date rape cases in Texas and Florida. Reportedly, the drug was used as a kind of Mickey Finn, slipped to someone unwitting, after which they were sexually abused.

It may well have happened that way. But since a person is usually considered innocent until proven guilty, should not the same be true of a chemical? Does anyone believe that the United States can, or for that matter should, unilaterally declare substances to be criminal based on the evidence of local prosecutors? Those 60 other countries where Rophynol is legal didn't follow our lead and ban it, so all that has been achieved is the creation of a new black market for those with access. A pill that might cost 50 cents in Mexico can be sold for $10 or $15 by the time it hits the club scene in New York or San Francisco.

Is Rophynol available online as well? Check out the number of queries related to it in the various drug discussion groups.

There are an enormous number of countries whose laws on what is or is not available by prescription are entirely different than those of the United States (or, than each other's). Heroin is obtainable by prescription in Britain; paregoric (tincture of opium, used to treat dysentery) used to be an over-the-counter item in France. In most of Central and South America, as well as Asia with the exception of Japan, if you know what you want and can pay for it with cash, it's yours. And there is very little, at this point, to keep a pharmacy in Rio, or Tijuana, or Sofia from going online and offering to anyone who can pay the freight, as the Dutch gentleman said, "that which is difficult for you to obtain at home." Most major pharmaceuticals are made and distributed in more than one country, sometimes by the same company (in Tijuana, many of the drugs sold in pharmacies are manufactured in the United States, they just cost 1/5 as much) and sometimes by licensees.

The economic incentive is very real; the access to technology is very real; the increasing numbers of people without access to basic health care or medicine are very real. Internet sales of contraband may start with people who order so-called illicit drugs, but in a short time it will cross over to people ordering drugs just not approved here yet, or drugs which are simply too expensive in the developed countries. And there are not, will not, and cannot be enough postal and custom inspectors to stop them all. By comparison, cutting off the flow of cocaine from South America is an easy task, for this evolution, though it may start with those who self-medicate for pleasure, will quickly reach those who medicate to stay alive, and at that point it will be unstoppable by any government.

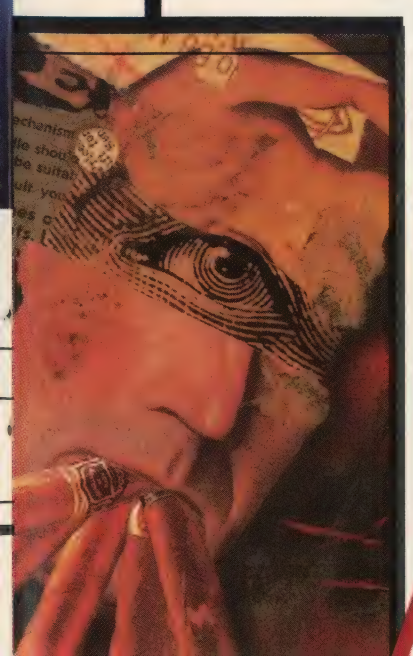
In the schemata of Internet economics, pornography counts as "information" and switchblade knives and drugs, count as durable goods. There are still others that are breaching walls; bootleg videos and CDs are a staple of Net commerce. So are guns. There are Web sites that have all manner of weapons for sale. And sellers that aren't listed on sites, which are mostly based

in the United States and thus formally required to comply with U.S. laws relating to firearms purchases, are often discussed in the Usenet **rec.guns** group.

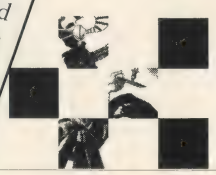
Again, it's economics at work. The end of the Cold War has left countries from Nicaragua to the Philippines with huge arsenals of weapons they no longer need. Tanks and armored personnel carriers can be bought by governments (although there was a recent news report that a representative of a Colombian cocaine cartel had attempted to purchase a surplus Russian Tango class submarine for cocaine smuggling. Leaving aside jokes about what a torpedo from that sub would be like, the carrying capacity of a Tango, stripped of armament, would be in the hundreds of tons). The small arms market is still here and still booming and there are enormous stockpiles of the stuff all over the globe. It might be hard to consummate a deal online, but under the right conditions, all the preliminary contacts could be made, including the posting of descriptions and pictures of weapons, ammunition, etc.

Would the United States Customs Service or the EEC Customs Services catch an antitank rocket being sent in to a citizen? Probably, but don't bet the ranch on it. Would they catch 10,000 automatic rifles, suitably disassembled and concealed in other merchandise, or 50,000 pistols? It is very doubtful. Perhaps they could get one in every four such shipments, which is exponentially higher than the one in every 10 they estimate they get in hard drugs (cocaine and heroin). That would still leave a lot of armament out there, as indeed there already is.

What is to be done? Information may want to be free, and even hard goods, pharmaceutical or explosive, may want to travel to where buyers have cash to procure them. Indeed, they travel that way now and enrich none but the coffers of multinational criminal cartels. By its very nature, the Internet can increase this traffic by orders of magnitude, far beyond the abilities of any government, or group of governments to control it, and it could force us into a war that would make the Cold War with all its billions wasted look like a kindergarten party. But there is another alternative. It is neither risk-free nor pain-free, but it is there.



Because the Internet is an international medium, governments will have to begin to think very seriously about what laws they mean to enforce, and how to go about it. If the United States does not intend to declare war on Denmark over the issue of child pornography, then a more sensible approach is required. If the United States and the rest of the EEC do not intend to declare war on the Netherlands over their attitudes toward decriminalizing soft drugs, then a more sensible attitude is required (this would have the additional benefit of saving millions of taxpayer dollars in suits against Arizona and California). No one country can any longer dictate what world policy should be; there are simply too many other voices and too many other interests to be heard. Certainly, the United States can say that it doesn't want Rophynol to be licensed and sold here—indeed, it wasn't, even before the ban—but, when the EEC countries, several years ago, took that same attitude toward Halcion, another chemical cousin of Valium, it was the United States that took umbrage at the actions of the European nations. A corollary of Newton's Law operates now in cyberspace with regard to international trade and censorship: stupid actions create equal and opposite stupid actions, and in digital time.



And what this means, in real-world terms, is that the various international organizations, from the United Nations to the International Court in The Hague are going to have to become arbiters, and arbiters with some powers of enforcement, if the Internet is to become a heavily traveled world infobahn. Without that happening, it will be as if a superhighway could be held up by every little corrupt sheriff who wanted to set up a speed trap on his little stretch of road.

They're Better

Ren & Stimpy Creator John Kricfalusi Brings His

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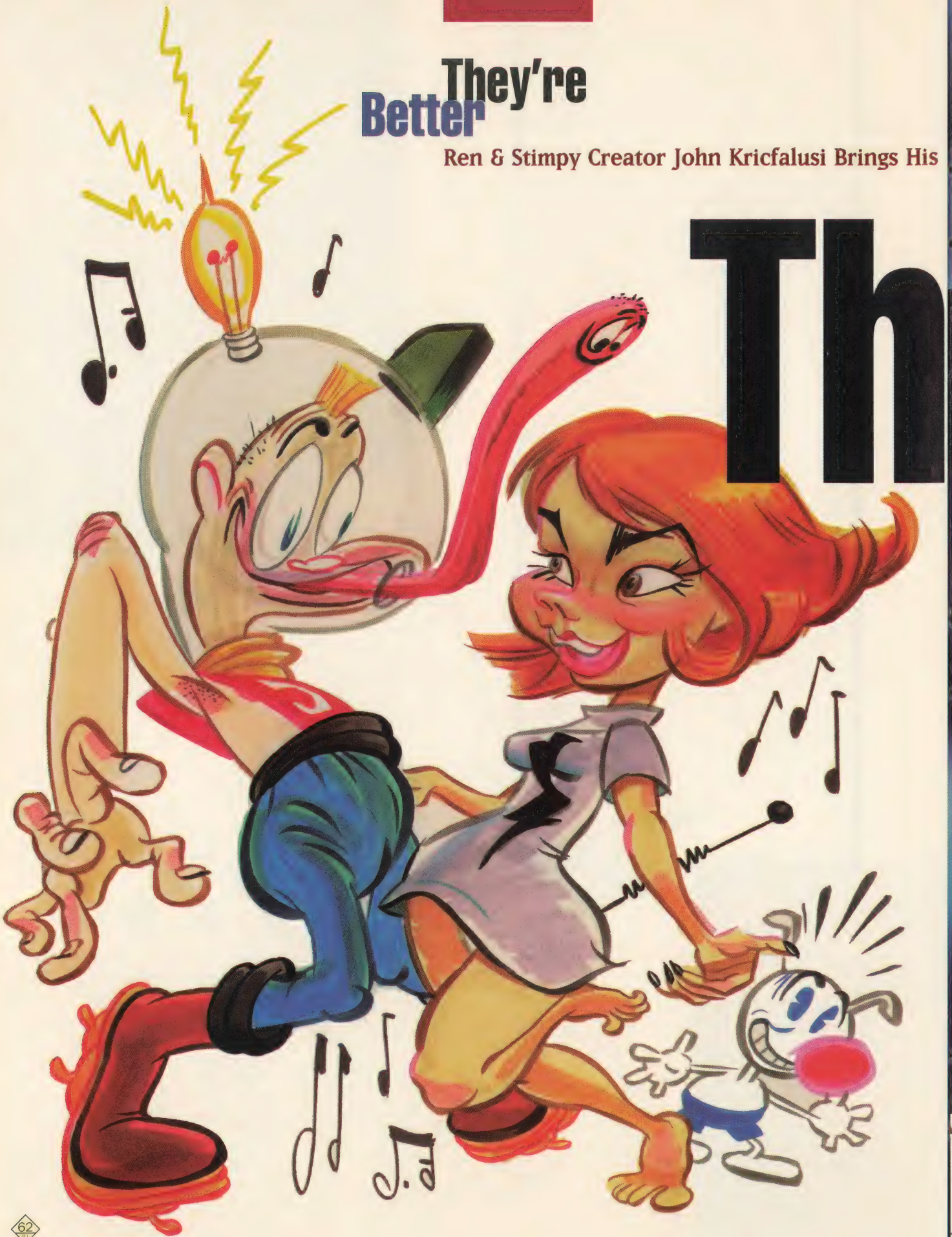


Outlandish Animation To The Web

They're Bad: Than Good

ON THE NET WITH . . .

Shifting uncomfortably in my seat, I fear that *Ren & Stimpy* creator and Spumco President John Kricfalusi might actually make good on his threat and tear my lips right off. Invoking the voice of everybody's favorite neurotic Chihuahua, Kricfalusi imitates a scene from the classic episode where stupid Swedish cousin Sven, and even stupider companion Stimpy, have smashed Ren's priceless collection of dinosaur droppings and his jar of rare and incurable diseases.

Somehow, I've come to play Stimpy in Kricfalusi's re-enactment. His chair knocked over, his face burning with murderous fury, Kricfalusi slams his hands down on his desk. "You know what I'm going to do to you?!" he huffs with psychotic pleasure. I shake my head "no," partly amused, partly terrified. "First, I'm going to tear your lips out. Yeah, that's what I'm going to do, tear them right out. And then, I'm going to gouge your eyes out. And you know what else? I'm going to tear your arms right out of the sockets, and they're going to go 'pop,' just like that."

Before I can wipe away the cold bead of sweat that's glissading across my nervous grin, Kricfalusi calms himself, almost as cartoonishly fast as he had riled himself up. Righting his chair and sitting down once again, he explains to me in a more even tone, "That speech was created to avoid any physical violence in that episode of *Ren & Stimpy*. But as soon as we handed in the film, [Nickelodeon] edited out, 'gouge your eyes out.' It's totally arbitrary what networks cut. It's criminal. It ruins the art, it mutilates it."

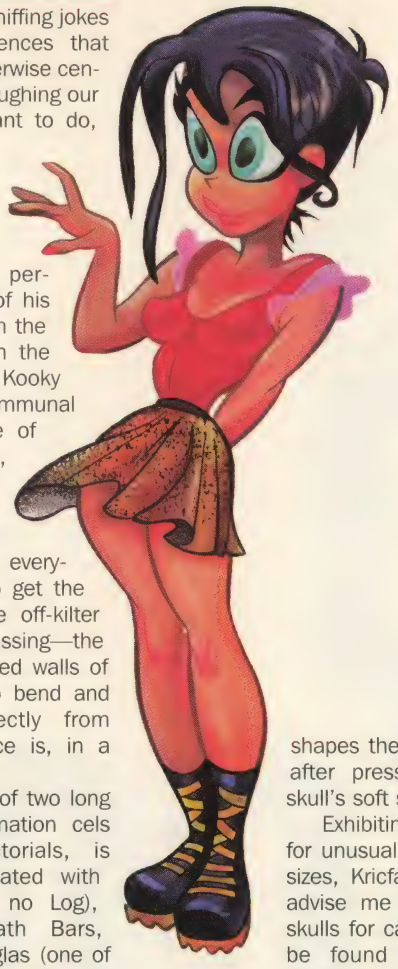
And that's why Kricfalusi has taken his act to the Web. No censorship of his work, no network type expurgating lines or suggesting lame jokes. The company's Web site (**www.spumco.com**) promises to include all of the

by Rob Bernstein

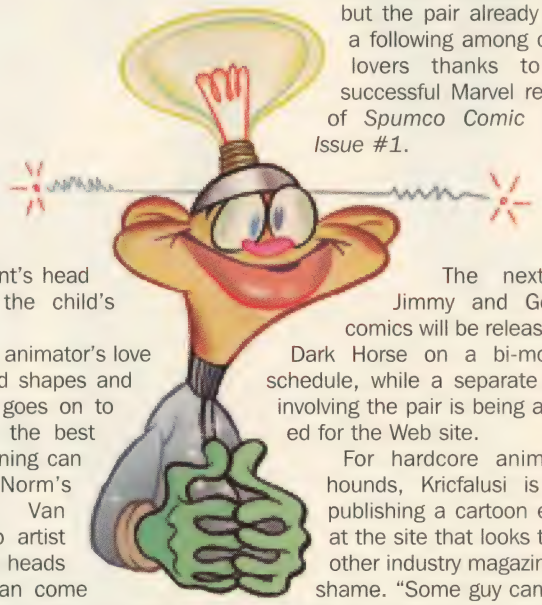
dirty pictures, underwear-sniffing jokes and nipple-twisting sequences that corporate execs would otherwise censor. "If we're sitting here laughing our guts out at a gag we want to do, we're just going to do it and we don't care who we're going to offend."

Kricfalusi's offbeat humor and anything-goes, anti-network disposition pervades nearly every nook of his company, reflecting itself in the office's laid-back decor, in the silly posting about the Kooky Spooky Yo-Yo on the communal fridge, even in the name of the company itself, which, an employee admits in confidence, was chosen because "it sounds like a dirty word." Whatever it is, everyone at Spumco seems to get the same joke. At times, the off-kilter atmosphere is all encompassing—the water-stained, wood-paneled walls of the office space seem to bend and twist as if inked directly from Kricfalusi's pen. The place is, in a word, loony.

At the far end of one of two long hallways, hung with animation cels and comical staff pictorials, is Kricfalusi's office. Decorated with assorted baubles (sorry, no Log), Flintstone Glycerine Bath Bars, framed shots of Kirk Douglas (one of Kricfalusi's heroes) and Three Stooges puppets designed by Kricfalusi himself, the workspace feels more informal and lounge-like than most family rec rooms. There, along with Spumco's producer and Webmaster, Stephen Worth, Kricfalusi is describing a new strip entitled "Baby Comes First." The story involves Spumco star Jimmy the Idiot Boy, who, while babysitting a child, accidentally mis-



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: SPUMCO BABE SODY POP; JIMMY OF THE FUTURE; MTV-BANNED SCENE FROM SPUMCO'S BJÖRK VIDEO "I MISS YOU." ACROSS: COVER ART FOR DARK HORSE'S *SPUMCO COMIC BOOK ISSUE #1*



shapes the infant's head after pressing the child's skull's soft spot.

Exhibiting an animator's love for unusual head shapes and sizes, Kricfalusi goes on to advise me that the best skulls for cartooning can be found at Norm's Restaurant in Van Nuys, Calif. "No artist can imagine the heads that the Lord can come up with. The Lord is the funniest man ever."

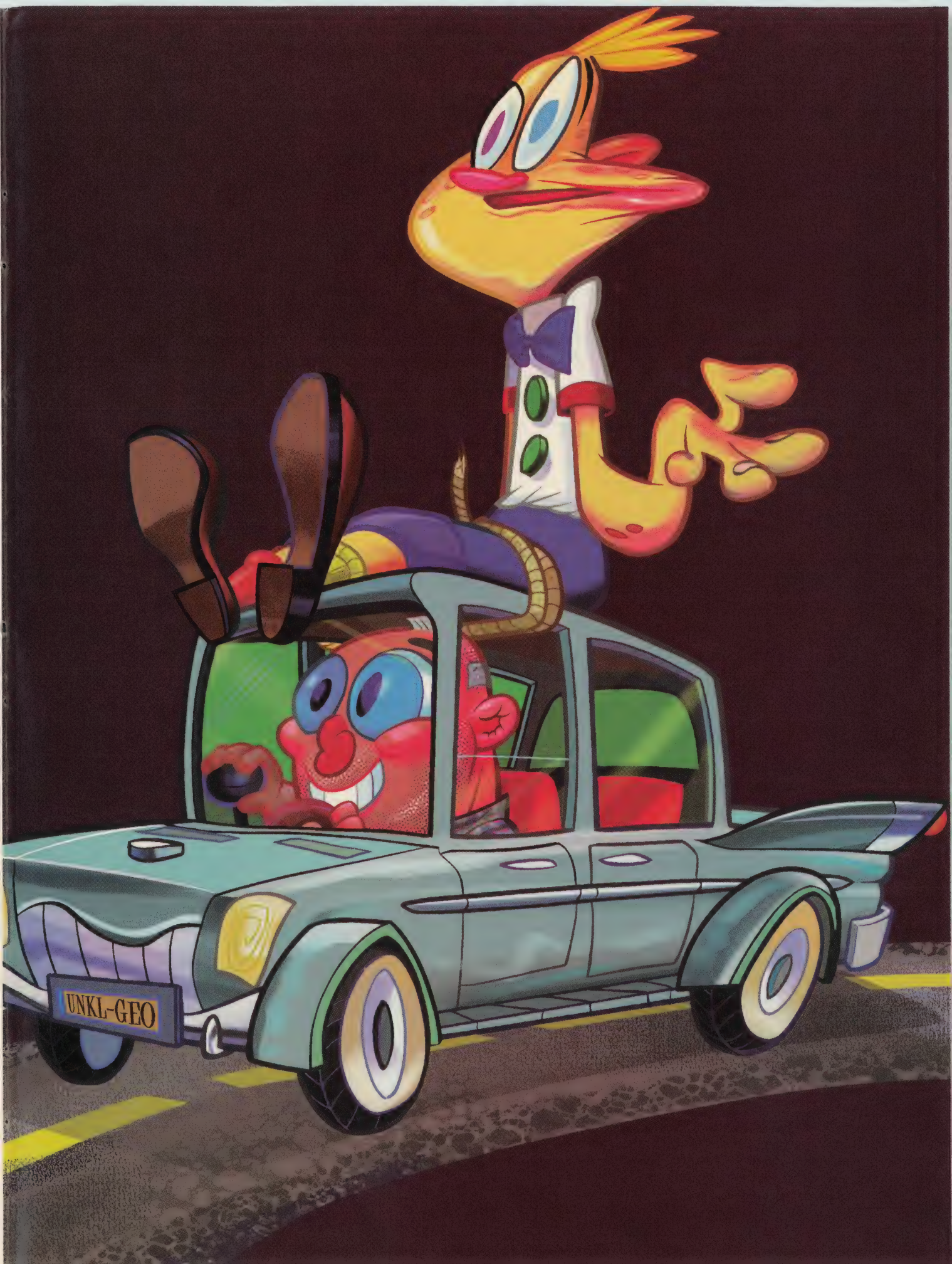
Eventually, after a few other digressions, including a lengthy and detailed depiction of Tank Abbott, a frequent combatant in a pay-per-view *Ultimate Fighting* show—"the last vestige of honest entertainment in the world," according to Kricfalusi—the two disclose the plans for the company Web site.

Spumco.com is an ambitious project that has been in the making for the last six months. Affecting a '50s, Ovaltine ad campaign sensibility, the site satirically dubs itself "The Wonderful World of Cartoons." And indeed it's just that. The page doesn't offer Captain Midnight decoder rings, nor does it provide much with regard to *Ren & Stimpy,* which Spumco developed and sold to Nickelodeon in 1990. Instead, visitors to the site will discover the company's marquee animated characters, Jimmy the Idiot Boy, a low-IQ'd lad with hormone control problems, and George Liquor American, an angry, commie-loathing jingoist who guest starred in several *Ren & Stimpy* episodes, including the banned "Man's Best Friend." The unlikely pair, who recently appeared in a video Kricfalusi developed for Icelandic rocker Björk, and who were adapted to star in TV ad campaigns for Fanta Orange Soda in Mexico, Barq's Root Beer in the United States and Aoki's Pizza in Japan, are already emerging as hot, new animated stars. They're a ways away from matching the explosive popularity of Spumco forerunners Ren and Stimpy, who were originally conceived of by Kricfalusi as Jimmy's and George's pets, but the pair already have a following among comic lovers thanks to the successful Marvel release of *Spumco Comic Book Issue #1.*

The next six Jimmy and George comics will be released by Dark Horse on a bi-monthly schedule, while a separate story involving the pair is being adapted for the Web site.

For hardcore animation hounds, Kricfalusi is also publishing a cartoon e-zine at the site that looks to put other industry magazines to shame. "Some guy came up with all the opinions on animation like 40 years ago, and everybody has blindly spouted them since then," argues Kricfalusi whose unique work has received sharp criticism from more conservative-thinking, persnickety animators. "We offer information about cartoons other magazines wouldn't print. We've already interviewed all kinds of animators, classic animators like Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera, Friz Freleng, and people in the business now like Mike Judge, the creator of *Beavis and Butt-head.*"

Less daffy fanatics of animation, to whom the above names mean nothing, can choose instead to peruse the site's wealth of posted drawings, download QuickTimes and .avi files of Spumco works, like the animated NBC peacock commissioned by the network, or view a real-time video (served from RealVideo servers) of the afore-


UNKL-GEO

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Jim Smith

mentioned Björk music video and Aoki Pizza commercial. Of course, diehards can also enter the company store which offers some incredibly cool, and some incredibly strange products, like limited-edition animation cels, painting kits and speaking Jimmy the Idiot Boy dolls (apparently, the dolls have sold out). Convinced that only "trustworthy" proprietors selling quality goods on the Net will survive, Kricfalusi feels Spumco is well-positioned for the future.

Not surprisingly, Microsoft is also hoping to rope in the studio—as content providers for the face-lifted Microsoft Network. "The people at Microsoft have an interesting idea," says Kricfalusi. "They want a story that we already wrote called 'Weekend Pussy Hunt.' The show won't just tell one linear story. You'll be able to follow any of the characters. It's a pretty good idea, but I think it's too simple. I imagine we're going to discover a lot more things to make it interactive."

Kricfalusi welcomes the "interactive" challenge, which really is not surprising; after all, his work is some of the most free-thinking animation that's been done in years: rebellious, innovative, nose-tweaking. But will interactive animation draw? Can it work? Kricfalusi is the first to admit that he hasn't got the answer, but he's not afraid to find it out, explaining that there's little to lose, except maybe time, since the Net is such a cheap

medium to work within. "That's a big factor that's gone from entertainment, the ability to fail," says Kricfalusi, who views his online domain as an experimental laboratory. "You're not allowed to make a mistake. In the process of everyone guessing what is a mistake and what is not a mistake, you lose

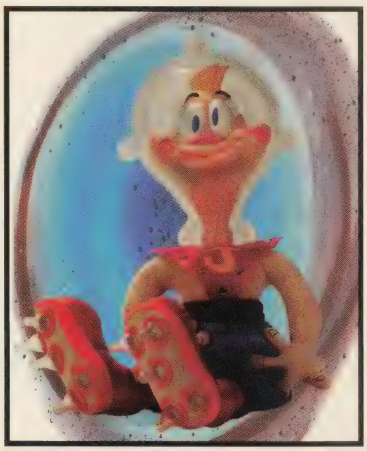
everything. Part of getting good at anything is being able to fail."

Product testing, market surveys—it's all wasted protein according to Kricfalusi, who has always lived by his instincts. A native Canadian, the maverick animator moved to Los Angeles in the late '70s to pursue a career in what he insists is, "the highest form of art ever created." Inspired by such late greats as Bob Clampett, famed for his work on classic Bugs Bunny cartoons, and Dave and Max Fleischer who began producing Betty Boop cartoons in the early '30s, Kricfalusi says he was amazed by the medium's versatility, its integration of sounds, picture, rhythm, abstract design, and of course, gags. But after working on *The New Adventures of Beany and Cecil* for ABC, he realized that resuscitating the suffering art form would mean going about it alone. "The network wanted to have Beany and Cecil teach moral lessons. Bob Clampett cartoons teaching moral lessons? He was always sneaking dirty jokes into his stuff. I mean, Cecil is a big pecker."

Thus Spumco was born. It wasn't long before the talented Kricfalusi was invited to pitch original show ideas to Nickelodeon, which was looking to purchase copyrights to new characters not based on existing toy product lines. Unwilling to part with his darling Idiot Boy and raucous George Liquor, Kricfalusi instead developed a project based on the two characters' pets, Ren and Stimpy.

And it was a smash hit. The show succeeded in becoming one of the most watched shows in cable broadcasting history. Nickelodeon, realizing they had a winner in their midst, began to meddle with Spumco's daily operation. Fights inevitably ensued between network and creator, and in 1992, with his contract up, Kricfalusi was shown the door. The move proved fatal for the beloved *Ren & Stimpy* show, which lost Spumco's *élan vital* and, more significantly in advertisers' minds, its viewers.

Despite the popularity of *Ren & Stimpy*, the three years succeeding the unfortunate dissolution of the show found the Spumco gang falling on hard times, keeping the company barely out of the red with the odd project here and there. The Nickelodeon breakup left other networks wary of the "combative" Kricfalusi. In 1996, however, the work drought came to a fortuitous end, bygones finally bygones, as studios and licensees



again began to turn to Spumco to shake up the animation industry and act as bellwether on a number of new projects. In fact, Spumco is now in the process of developing three 7-minute animated shorts for Hanna-Barbera, starring Ranger Smith of *Yogi Bear* fame.

"As long as there is infinite choice, the people will gravitate toward better," says Kricfalusi, making reference to the Web, the success and failure of content online, and his studio's 180-degree about-face.

"If you're a good performer, the audience will love you and ask you for an encore. If you're crappy, they'll boo you off stage."

With spumco.com now boasting thousands of hits a week, it appears the people have spoken. And they're cheering, "Encore!"

by Mark Katzman

FAQ: BEING-IN NOW

The Digital Be-In (**www.be-in.com**) might have begun as an art party and hip homage to the original Human Be-In, the seminal "gathering of the tribes" that drew 30,000 people to Golden Gate Park for one mind-bending afternoon in January of 1967, but it has since grown to reflect the evolutionary and humanistic implications of the digital medium itself. It also has become the meeting place for what Michael Gosney, executive producer of the annual event, calls "the generational tribes."

Gosney is the founder of Verbum, a multimedia publisher (*Multimedia Power Tools*, *The Official Photo CD Handbook*, among others). *Verbum 1.0: The Journal of Personal Computer Aesthetics*, a blend of cutting-edge digital art, interviews and practical "how to" was first produced by Gosney in a La Mesa,

Calif., garage in 1986. In 1990, it became *Verbum Interactive*, the first truly integrated multimedia publication on CD-ROM, which served as a catalyst for the inner circle of the industry. Today, *Verbum Interactive Journal* (**www.verbum.com**) is a visionary forum in the making.

Verbum even attracted the attention of the late Timothy Leary (**www.leary.com**), who called Gosney "one of the few great pioneer humanists in the digital world."

Verbum and the Be-In aren't about celebrating "technology for technology's sake," says Gosney. "What really matters, versus all the hype and all the toys, is how we can use these things to enrich our lives, to expand consciousness, to create art."

IU caught up with Gosney at Verbum's office in San Francisco's Multimedia Gulch and at the nearby Brain Wash Café.

***INTERNET UNDERGROUND*: HOW DID THE DIGITAL BE-IN FIRST EVOLVE?**

Michael Gosney: It evolved directly from the original Verbum parties, where we had a bunch of digital artists getting together in a hotel suite and showing off artwork on their Macintoshes. We decided to have a little bigger party the third year and we called it the Digital Art Be-In, in a kind of tongue-in-cheek notion, observing the connection between the '60s and the personal computer, along with the particularly cool applications that it spawned. The people that were involved in developing the advanced tools, both hackers and artists, seemed to have some real counter-cultural roots.

***IU*: A THREAD RUNS BETWEEN THE '60S COUNTER-CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE COMPUTER CULTURE?**

MG: Yeah. There's a lot to this subject, of course. There are parallels in the development and use of new media. In the '60s it was the underground newspapers and the recording industry and the underground radio stations. In the '90s, with desktop publishing, we've got the first phase of the digital media revolution, which went on to multimedia and now the Internet. But this evolution needs careful articulation, and I'm hoping we can do that in a multimedia book.

***IU*: HOW DID THE THEME FOR THIS YEAR'S NINTH BE-IN, CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN CYBERSPACE, COME ABOUT?**

MG: There's a tendency for a myopic view that's typical of the cults of new technologies. The original cult—the techno-cult of Internet development—has been very much Silicon Valley white. We need diversity—the whole idea of cyberspace reflecting the world and creating new levels of interaction among people and groups. The theme followed the social cause of last year's Be-In—freedom of speech on the Internet. It also signifies a gathering of the generational tribes, bringing together the '60s counter-culture, the '80s cyber-culture and the millennial rave-culture, and exploring the common threads in those three spheres.

***IU*: WHERE WAS THE VENUE THIS YEAR?**

MG: The SOMAR Gallery. It's a multicultural arts center here in San Francisco.

***IU*: YOU HAD A LIVE NETCAST?**

MG: Our netcast took two forms: the on-the-fly photo-journalism and the live, video program that broadcast streaming video to the Be-In site using Graham Technology Solutions (**www.graham.com**). We had a professional video crew and a director. It

was a five-hour live event. It included interviews with our visionaries, roving cameras as well as fixed cameras on the stages. We put original writing and original photography up on the Web site while the evening was unfolding. It presents a fascinating constraint that many of the participants find exhilarating—to have to deliver on the spot. Some of the reportage is quite poetic, some more "factual" in a traditional, journalistic sense. Live reportage on the Internet is going to become more popular as people become hip to it. The whole idea of netcasting—this is in an early stage and has some very exciting potentials. We've begun an archive on the Be-In site. We have a lot of material. It's pretty interesting to see how the events grew over the last nine years.

***IU*: WHO WERE THE ATTENDING VISIONARIES THIS YEAR?**

MG: Willie Brown, the mayor of San Francisco, made a great presentation about his enthusiasm for the original Human Be-In, when he lived in Haight-Ashbury. He went on and on about the importance of this Be-In and talked about cultural diversity and San Francisco being the appropriate source and inspiration for cultural diversity in cyberspace. Malcolm CasSalle spoke. He's a 26-year-old techno-visionary and the co-founder of Net Noir **(www.netnoir.com),** the African culture channel. We had John Gilmore of the Electric Frontier Foundation; Dennis Parone, who runs the Cannabis Buyers' Club; and Delores Huerta, the United Farm Workers' spokesperson. We had technical, social and spiritual visionaries this year. The spiritual visionaries were Allen Cohen and Chet Helms, connections to the Human Be-In, celebrating its 30th anniversary; Larry Harvey, the organizer of the Burning Man project (**www.istorm.com**); and Matthew Fox, who has just opened his creation/spirituality school. He introduced the "Seminar" that started at midnight, which was actually a rave. It was produced by several of the really great underground rave circles in San Francisco.

***IU*: ARE RAVES A KIND OF TRIBAL ECSTASY?**

MG: The rave is a tribal, ritualistic kind of experience. It's definitely reminiscent of the Be-In. You know, the whole acid test kind of thing. It's that same pattern, that same tendency that we have to seek ecstasy, in ourselves and with each other. It's a reinvention of that celebratory kind of environment that each generation tends to create.

***IU*: WHAT WAS THE ALTAR ROOM?**

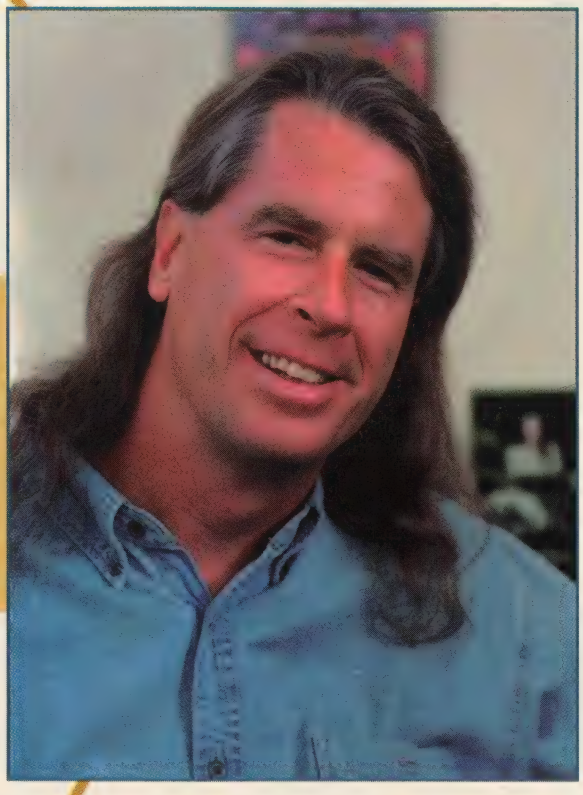
MG: The Altar Room was a kind of spin-off of the connection with the rave culture. It brought together the works of several different "altar artists." It's the first time that all of these altar artists, mostly women—we call them Altar Goddesses—have all worked together in one place. They've all done altars for their respective rave.

***IU*: CAN THIS WORK BE SEEN ON THE SITE?**

MG: Yes. There's an area called the Virtual Altar Room. It has QuickTime VR shots of the Altar Room. It's quite beautiful.

***IU*: AND THE AVATAR TELEPORT?**

MG: Whereas our overriding theme this year was cultural diversity in cyberspace and the anniversary of the original Be-In, the technical theme complementing them was avatars and virtual worlds. The Avatar Teleport was created both as a physical space at the event and as a section on the Web site. If you were at the event, you could walk up to a terminal, don an avatar and go into a virtual world. Or you can tune into the Web site and do the same thing. So there were people in Black Sun worlds, Alpha Worlds—the Teleport brought together the leading developers of virtual-world technology. Those were the two provocative, new



features at the Be-In this year that we're going to continue developing for the 10th anniversary Be-In next January.

***IU*: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BE-IN HIGHLIGHTS FOR YOU?**

MG: Well, the 40-minute jam-ecstatic-drum-dancing ritual at the sixth Be-In was probably one of the high points. We've got that on a nicely edited video tape. I think Tim Leary talking at the fifth, sixth and seventh Be-Ins were great moments.

***IU*: YOU GOT TO KNOW LEARY PRETTY WELL, DIDN'T YOU?**

MG: I got to know Tim through the Be-In and ended up knowing him very well, actually, in his later years. He was always a great proponent of the original Human Be-In and helped us make the connection with our '90s Be-Ins. He *was* the connection, in many ways, because of the visionaries of the '60s and the consciousness movement back then, he really was the only one that emerged in the early '80s as a proponent of computers and the cyberspace paradigm.

***IU*: WHAT EXACTLY IS THE BE-IN CONCEPT?**

MG: I think ecstatic awareness is what the Be-In is celebrating. An awareness of self, an awareness of life and light. Upward, evolving potentiality.

***IU*: WHERE IS THE INTERNET TAKING US?**

MG: To each other [laughs]. I'm very excited about the multilingual, communicative efforts that are being made in both travel and cultural studies and cultural exchange. I think it's truly going to break through a lot of the educational barriers that have kept our various cultures from not really knowing each other.

***IU*: WHAT WAS IT LIKE BEING A GUEST-IN-THE-FLESH ON THOMAS DOLBY'S HYPRACTV8 AREA ON AOL?**

MG: That was the first time I've really been on the spot like that, being in a chat-room with people asking me questions. It was pretty neat. What I particularly liked was when a couple of younger kids kind of bounced in, saying, "Hey, what's going on?" and "What age and sex are you?" and this and that, right in the middle of our *thoughtful* discussion about the Be-In. Then, after listening to what we were saying, one girl goes, "It really feels good in here." [laughs] Just the idea of being in cyberspace, a collective space where you're typing letters to each other is fascinating in its primitive qualities. But I see it getting into a much more advanced form, with visual accompaniment and sound and the ability to carry on a private conversation and also be in a room with people. It's going to be interesting to see where it goes in the coming years. Certainly the idea of having an avatar and being in a room and looking at other avatars and moving away or toward them and talking to them or away from them—that whole immersive, 3-D chat environment, 3-D world is what everybody's working on now and thinking about. There are several competing standards for avatars and dynamics of those kind of spaces. It'll be fascinating to see it unfold.

***IU*: WOULD YOU CARE TO TAKE A PEEK OVER THE MILLENNIUM POINT—WHERE ARE THE TRIBES HEADING?**

MG: We're going to have a heavy youthful movement coming about over the next three or four years. There's going to be some pretty hardcore protest about conservatism and the fear and ignorance shackling our societies. Into the new millennium, there's going to be a collective, "We're not going to take this anymore!" We know what we're doing and we're moving forward in the digital and chemical frontiers of life and consciousness here on this planet. The new economic order that the Information Age is spawning is going to be very closely tied to the vision of the young minds taking shape now. It's going to be *undeniable*, just as the personal computer was undeniable to the Communist regimes of a few years ago.

►CYBERSITTER'S UNSPECTACULAR ETHICS◄

by Jonathan Wallace

403 FORBIDDEN

Solid Oak Software, a California company, recently added my Webzine, *The Ethical Spectacle*, **www.spectacle.org**, to the list of sites blocked by its Cybersitter software. Solid Oak markets Cybersitter as a shield against pornography, hate speech and criminal activity on the Net, but the *Spectacle* is a monthly collection of thought pieces concentrating on the intersection (or collision) of ethics, law and politics in our society. The whole experience illustrates very nicely how blocking software, touted by some as a reasonable alternative to government intervention, can profoundly harm our freedom of speech.

Last summer, Solid Oak threatened two well-respected Net journalists, Declan McCullagh and Brock Meeks, with prosecution for writing a piece about the company's expansive and surprising blocking practices. Soon after, Bennett Haselton, a student at Vanderbilt and founder of Peacefire, an anti-censorship organization for young people (**www.peacefire.org**), wrote an essay pointing out that Cybersitter blocked sites like the National Organization for Women (**www.now.org**) and *Mother Jones* magazine (**www.mojo.com**). Solid Oak's president, Brian Milburn, responded by blocking Haselton's Web pages and calling him an "aspiring felon." I wrote to Milburn, objecting to his bullying behavior. Next, I added a "Don't Buy Cybersitter" button to the *Spectacle* top page, linked to a copy of Haselton's essay, with some added thoughts of my own and links to other pages blocked by Cybersitter. Solid Oak blocked the *Spectacle* a few weeks later.

I wrote to Milburn requesting an explanation and received a response: "Do not contact this company again." I learned from Haselton that Solid Oak had created an e-mail alias, blocking.problems@solidoak.com, supposedly to act as an arbiter when people object to the blocking of sites, so I copied my correspondence to this alias. Here is the answer I received: "Your 'appeal' is noted. DO NOT SEND E-MAIL TO THIS DOMAIN AGAIN."

In the weeks that have elapsed since then, scores of other people from around the world have been kind enough to write to Solid Oak, protesting the blocking of Peacefire and *The Ethical Spectacle*. Milburn and Solid Oak's marketing exec, Marc Kanter, have spoken to the press, calling me variously a "publicity seeker" and the dupe of a "right-wing agenda," among other things. Milburn's favorite explanation is that I link from my pages to other blocked sites, such as Peacefire. This is particularly strange reasoning; if Cybersitter now blocks everyone who links to *The Ethical Spectacle*, Peacefire, NOW or any other banned site, sooner or later Solid Oak will block the entire Internet.

Cybersitter blocks the whole spectacle.org domain, including every one of the 26 monthly issues published so far. The most influential issue of the *Spectacle* was the June 1995 "An Auschwitz Alphabet," **www.spectacle.org/695/ausch.html**. This compilation of Holocaust materials and essays about them has resulted in hundreds of favorable letters from teachers, schoolchildren and college students around the world.

I collected about 10 of these responses and sent them to Brian Milburn in a letter in which I also asked him:

"1. Why do you think your dislike of criticism is more important than the benefit these students gain from accessing my site?

"2. Why do you think you are more qualified than these teachers to determine what our children should see?"

Seth Finkelstein, a free speech activist based in Boston, has been extensively educating the world about blocking software (see **www.mit.edu/activities/safe/labeling/summary.html**). Finkelstein says: "It's a bait-and-switch maneuver. The censorware makers will use sex panics to get people to use their products, but then extend their secret blacklists to all sorts of other material, including criticism of them." He has frequently made the point that blocking software is not a less restrictive alternative to government censorship; it is the first step toward government intervention. The inevitable second step is that laws will be passed making use of blocking software mandatory.

Finkelstein is right. Bills pending in California, Minnesota and Florida would do just that. California Senate bill AB132, for example, would require all school districts to buy blocking software. If these schools respond by purchasing Cybersitter, then Solid Oak will become the official arbiter of what California schoolchildren can see on the Internet—and they won't be able to see *The Ethical Spectacle*, "An Auschwitz Alphabet," Peacefire or NOW.

Just think about that. ●

Jonathan Wallace (jw@bway.net) is a software executive attorney based in New York City. He was a plaintiff in ***ACLU v. Reno****, the case against the Communications Decency Act. With Mark Mangan, he co-authored* ***Sex, Laws and Cyberspace*** *(Henry Holt 1996), about Internet censorship.*

WEBGuide

72 TUNES The beat goes on.

73 TECH Expansion ports for your electronic aptitude.

74 ENTERTAINMENT Web sites that would like to thank the Academy.

75 READ Our zone for zines.

76 RECREATION Advice and activities for your wetware.

77 CULTURE Where Lisa Simpson might go if she surfed the Net.

78 HACKING For informational purposes only.

79 SCIENCE FICTION The world of technological revolutions, utopian visions and cataclysmic prophecies.

80 CARTOONS Because we like drawings.

Some of our readers have written in asking us for advice on how to hack into other people's network systems. We think this is pretty funny, seeing as how some of us have trouble operating the coffee machine. We can't tell you how to embark on a life of crime as a computer cracker, but in this month's WebGuide, we're pointing you to a few fringe element types who can. Just don't come crying to us if you wind up in a cell with the Menendez boys. Our other featured categories delve into sites about science fiction, comics and cartoons. (We thought it'd be nice to pander to the geeks out there. Not that we had you, personally, in mind. Not at all.) Jamming with us on the WebGuide this issue are Simon Burris (Culture), Lars Hundley (Read, Tech) and Helen Lee (Tunes). All told, it's a choice selection of bandwidth, so put on your red shoes and click the blues away.

10 THINGS JESUS WANTS YOU TO KNOW

weber.u.washington.edu/~ten/

The state of Washington's biggest music zine is an excellent place to immerse yourself in the punk mindset. 10 Things, a virtual mecca on the Northwest's underground music scene, features local fare along with better-known bands like the Melvins and the Jesus Lizard. Plus, if you've ever wondered about the gory details of body piercing, or wanted punk fashion and cooking advice, you can find that here too.

★★★★

CMJ ONLINE

www.cmjmusic.com

This is the online counterpart to the *CMJ New Music Monthly* and the *CMJ New Music Report*, both important names in the cutting-edge music world. Unfortunately, the site isn't perfect: Most of the music samples require high-speed access to play properly, and there's a deplorable lack of the reviews that makes the print versions so readable. Still, it's a nice source for news of the music world; we found out here that the Rhino Records-sponsored "SAT of music trivia" will be held live on the Internet on April 27.

★★★

DAVEY D'S HIP HOP CORNER

www.daveyd.com

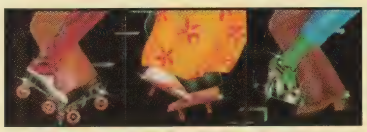
If you have a soft spot for hip hop, rap and the subculture surrounding those two forms of music, this is a veritable oasis. From a memorial for Tupac Shakur to user-submitted freestyle rhymes and articles on affirmative action, the Hip Hop Corner has everything you ever wanted to know about a vibrant and thriving scene. Let's just say it. This site is truly dope.

★★★★★

DISCOLAND: WHERE THE MUSIC NEVER ENDS!

www.inetimages.com/Discomike/discoland.htm

And you thought disco was dead. No such luck, as this site aptly proves. After all these years, it's quite a revelation to finally figure out the lyrics to Blondie's "Heart of Glass," view



the Disco Hall of Fame or discover how many of the top 100 disco songs (sound files included) you can actually remember. So if you're willing to admit you have occasional yearnings for the YMCA, get to this site and shake your groove thing.

★★★★

THE DROWNSODA HOLE WEBPAGES

www.clysmic.com/hole/

Once upon a time, Courtney Love was in a band. Still is, actually, but her rising star often seems to eclipse the other members. This Web site, named for a song that was featured on the soundtrack to the box-office bomb *Tank Girl*, is a real treat for fans of Hole. Among the highlights are a RealAudio version of Love and her late husband, Kurt Cobain, singing a duet version of "Asking For It," and a collection of her Internet postings. This is also the place to find out details such as the first album Love ever owned (*Free To Be You and Me*).

★★★★★

THE GREAT KAT, GUITAR GODDESS

www.greatkat.com

Imagine Beethoven on speed, playing heavy metal versions of his classical compositions. Add a touch of sadomasochism and moussed-up blonde hair, and you've got the Great Kat. Although it purports to be a music site, suggestive pictures of a domineering Kat seem to be the main attraction here. You might even mistake it for a porn site—it's definitely more style than substance. But it's worth coming to for the sheer novelty of it all—a Juilliard graduate, billed as the world's fastest speed freak guitarist, turning Rossini's *Barber of Seville* into a blistering metal-fest and sporting fake blood on her Frederick's of Hollywood clothes. Hmm.

★

THE IRISH MUSIC BOX

www.dojo.ie/musicbox/

This site isn't particular about what genre its featured musicians play, just as long as they're Irish. This makes for quite a mix—Riverdance and Celtic music is mixed with Dexy's Midnight Runners, U2 and Therapy?. The Irish Music Box concentrates on providing news, schedules and reviews of Irish music-makers at a simple, straightforward stop on the Web; the jukebox provides some cool tunes.

★★★

MOVIE TUNES

www.movietunes.com

Soundtracks add a lot of atmosphere to a film—what would *Star Wars* be without John Williams' musical score, for instance? This site isn't huge, but it is a good place to check out the pertinent facts about a movie's soundtrack if you're considering a purchase. The best part of our visit to Movie Tunes, believe it or not, was the news section—we were very excited about the continuing popularity of *Grease* and the prospect of a *Simpsons* soundtrack.

★★★

NOSFERATU'S BATTLE OF THE SONGS

www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/2884/

This site is just what it sounds like: Twice each month, the Webmaster chooses a few rock/alternative songs and surfers choose which one they like best. The votes are tallied, and new challengers are chosen. Not a terribly new idea, but here it is well-executed and well-designed.

★★★★

THE OFFICIAL RUTLES HOME PAGE

www.pythonline.com/rutles/

Who could forget the Rutles, that winsome band that spawned so many copycats, like those forgettable Beatles? The Pre-Fab Four's doings are part of history now—few can forget such events as the rumors of Stig's death, based his lack of pants on the cover of *Shabby Road* and the backwards line in "I Am the Waitress." Come here to relive all the antics, the interviews, the parody—and learn about the new album, *Archaeology*.

★★★

PERFECT SOUND FOREVER

www.furious.com/perfect/index.html

This is just a fun site with a huge selection of slightly edgy features, both on individual bands and the general music industry. In one, a former writer at *Rolling Stone* rails on the magazine, saying he was fired in part because he wrote a bad review of a Hootie and the Blowfish album. Other features have included stories of record company censorship and a reminiscence about a meeting with John Lennon. Music lovers will find much to enjoy here.

★★★★★

PHISH.NET

www.phish.net

The hard-to-define underground band Phish has attracted quite a number of loyal fans, some of whom have created this sanctuary for like-minded Web surfers. It comes complete with all the elements you'd expect from a fan site, from lyrics to an FAQ and information on how to tape Phish shows. Unfortunately, there aren't any sound files for those who'd like to sample the band's rock/classical/bluegrass/Latin/hardcore sounds, and parts of the site remain under construction. Even so, it's a fine source of information that's also easy to maneuver through.

★★★

ROCKAPELLA IN CYBERSPACE

www.rockapella.com

The soulful crooners of Rockapella can be found at a site that not only includes music from their most popular gig, PBS' "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego," but also lets users ask questions of the *a cappella* group and view postcards from its members (one, for instance, bemoans the lack of accommodations for tall people in Japan). The creation of a dedicated fan, the site includes a discography complete with sound files and the lyrics to every tune in Rockapella's repertoire, just in case you wanted to know.

★★★★★

APPLE LISA WEB PAGE

galena.tj.edu.inter.net/~tom/

Remember the Apple Lisa? Probably not, because it was a flop that was quickly made obsolete by the introduction of the Macintosh. For Tom Stepleton, the Lisa may be gone, but it's not forgotten. Be sure to check out the SAQ, or seldom asked questions. You have to appreciate that kind of honesty. If you're one of the quirky few who actually owns a Lisa and wants to use it, you can even download software and source code.

★★★★

BAD SCIENCE

www.ems.psu.edu/~fraser/BadScience.html

This site goes after science that is "persistently presented incorrectly by teachers and writers, presumably because they either do not know any better or because they don't really care enough to get it correct." Here you'll find out that sound does not travel better through solids, gravity in space is not zero and the greenhouse effect and global warming are not the same thing. Maybe our sixth grade science teachers should check this out.

★★★★

THE CU-SEEME COOL SITE

ucsu.colorado.edu/~hundley/

You know you're a CU-SeeMe addict if you find yourself dressing up and checking your hair before you get on the Internet. If you want to know anything and everything about videoconferencing with the freeware program CU-SeeMe, then here's the place. It even includes links so you can download the software and get up and running in a flash. Be sure to check out the section called "Freaks" that features screen shots of various weirdos spotted online.

★★★★

EXPLORATORIUM: EXPLORANET

www.exploratorium.edu/

They call the Exploratorium a "museum of science, art and human perception," but we say it's a cool place to find out about dissecting cow eyeballs. This Web site by the Exploratorium museum in San Francisco includes bells and whistles like RealAudio interviews, as well as step-by-step instructions for hands-on experiments like "Creating a Bubble Bomb." OK, so it's only a trick with baking soda and vinegar, but it sounds dangerous, doesn't it?

★★★★

IRC CENTRAL

www.connected-media.com/IRC/

Maybe you're already an IRC (Internet Relay Chat) regular, or maybe you've never even heard of it. Either way, you'll find something useful at this site. "Chat brings together the alter egos of housewives and gender benders, bored teens and armchair intellectuals, dateless geeks and virtual stalkers." Good information on scripts, bots and links to the latest IRC clients.

★★★

THE LAURA LEE SHOW

www.lauralee.com

Laura Lee's five-hour radio interview and call-in show covers, among other things, the "latest discoveries via science and technology," and is featured on more than 50 stations in the United States. If you can't pick her up in your area or you missed her last show, you can listen to her on this Web site using StreamWorks. The archives include such topics as Chinese pyramids, antimatter and evidence of life on Mars.

★★★★

NANOTECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

planet-hawaii.com/nanozine/

Nanotechnology is molecular manufacturing or, more simply, building things one atom at a time. A nanometer is one billionth of a meter, and approximately 10 atoms fit inside one nanometer. Once perfected, nanotechnology would mean self-assembling consumer goods, and the end of aging, death, famine and pollution. This site, written for "the intelligent lay person and scientist," wants to make nanotechnology the next media buzzword.

★★★★

OMNI

www.omnimag.com

If you can overlook some inexplicably long download times, this electronic version of the popular science magazine has plenty of Web-specific content, including a form-based IQ test, an online dream lab and a virtual book tour with Levar Burton of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Fine fiction and weekly updates on science stories like "The Biosphere's the Stage: Earth Science as Performing Art" round out the site.

★★★★

POLYMERS DOTCOM HOME PAGE

www.polymers.com/dotcom/home.html

We've only got one thing to say to you. Plastics.

★★★★

THE DR. CARL SAGAN MEMORIAL SITE

wwwvms.utexas.edu/~mrapp/sagan/sagan.html

Carl Sagan might be gone, but he is certainly not forgotten. His television show *Cosmos* introduced millions to astronomy. Michael Rapp, a student from the University of Texas, put together this page after Sagan's death at the end of 1996. You'll also find information here about *Contact*, the upcoming movie based on Sagan's science fiction novel of the same name.

★★★

SOLVING RUBIK'S CUBE USING THE BESTFAST ALGORITHM AND PROFILE TABLES

www.sunyit.edu/~millerd1/RUBIK.HTM

Remember the kid in middle school who could solve the Rubik's cube in less than three minutes? We'll bet he never said things like, "When we are presented with an unsolved cube, we could lay the mini-cubes all on a table in a row, oriented in the directions that they were when the cube was whole, and solve the puzzle by finding a series of moves that causes every mini-cube to be in its solved orientation."

★★★★

ROCKET-BELT.COM

www.rocket-belt.com

You probably thought rocket belts were just props from science-fiction movies in the 1950s, but no! They exist, and you can really fly with them. Read all about the RB-2000, "finest version of the Rocket Belt ever crafted, a real work of art, and one pretty bird." We just want to know: Where can you get one of these babies, and how much do they cost?

★★★★

TECH SUPPORT TALES

www.auricular.com/TST/tst1.html

To judge from the stories on this site, tech support staffers must have the patience of Job. You'll find all the apocryphal stories here, like the one about the woman who called in because she couldn't get the "foot pedal" on her computer to work properly. The foot pedal turned out to be her mouse. There are also plenty of new ones, and there's even a spot to make submissions of your own if you work in tech support and have a story.

★★★

ALICE'S ULTIMATE TEEN MOVIE PAGE

wilbur.wellesley.edu/am/amarwick/teen.htm

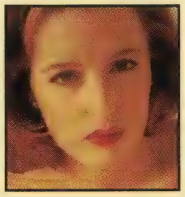
Centering mostly on that ultimate teen movie era, the 1980s, Alice's page fondly recalls the "mohawks, perms, leggings, hair bows, [and] skinny ties" of such films as *Say Anything...*, *Some Kind of Wonderful*, *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club* ("completely and totally a classic"). Links to Brat Pack fan pages, critiques of John Hughes' depiction of suburban America and individual movie reviews: "Is it normal to hate Emilio Estevez for no reason?"

★★★

GILLIAN ANDERSON ESTROGEN BRIGADE: THE WOMEN ARE OUT THERE

www.teatime.com/gaeb/

So maybe the Web doesn't really need another Gillian Anderson fan site—last time we checked on Yahoo!, the *X-Files* star had 65 sites to Pamela Anderson Lee's 20—but this one's got a bit of a twist. A counterpoint to the Gillian Anderson Testosterone Brigade, the GAEB is a fan club for women who think Ms. Anderson is, as both groups proclaim, "Intellectually Drop Dead Gorgeous." Its selectively linked-to sites include some lovely photo galleries full of "real Gillian Anderson pictures, not the X-rated fakes which are obvious products of some hormone-driven idiots who have paint-shop programs and think they're proficient at using them."



★★★★★

THE LIFE OF KENNETH BRANAGH

syru119-049.syr.edu/kenneth.htm

A beautifully concocted tribute to the actor and director known mostly for his film adaptations of Shakespeare, this site includes RealAudio interviews, excerpts from Branagh's autobiography, even a signed playbill from his 1990 stage production of *King Lear*. The gushily admiring text here seems to portray Branagh as an infallible genius; still, it's a bout of starry-eyed fandom that seems fixed on a fairly worthy object.

★★★★

JACKIE CHAN'S OFFICIAL HOME PAGE

www.jackiechan.com/

Here's something we wish more celebrities would do—set up friendly little Web sites with messages to fans (in this case it's "Hello! It is nice to see you in my home page"). Jackie, we learned here, got an award from the Hong Kong Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1986, and was made a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in 1989. In addition to pictures and a filmography, site visitors can view a page about Chan's movie *Thunderbolt*, which set a Hong Kong box office record.

★★★

DERMATOLOGY IN THE CINEMA

itsa.ucsf.edu/~vcr/Dermcin.html

Dr. Vail Reese has hit on a formula for success that you might have picked up from your high school composition teacher: Find a narrow topic, then say as much as you can about it. His site on Hollywood's portrayal of various skin conditions has garnered plenty of accolades already (including the distinction of being Gene Siskel's favorite movie site); if you haven't seen it yet, it's definitely worth a visit for discussions of albinism in movies ("I have yet to discover an albino character in a film that is not evil"), why small facial moles are considered "beauty marks" and whether Michael Jackson really has vitiligo.

★★★★★

THE UNOFFICIAL HARRISON FORD STUFF HOMEPAGE

www.mit.edu:8001/people/lpchao/harrison.ford.html

This site extols a nerdy audiovisual assistant and R.O.T.C. reject who went on to become a star actor and sex symbol and has appeared in "seven of the top 25 grossing movies in history." The collection of articles and interviews here is extensive, as are the lists of pictures, sound files and movie files—we liked "Han Solo blasts Greedo in Mos Eisley cantina."

★★★★

GRIT'S GUIDE TO BAD CHEESY PG FAMILY MOVIES

users.aol.com/gritman/fammov.htm

If those schmaltzy "family" movies about a boy and his dog (or a boy and his dolphin) turn your stomach, head to Grit's page for some sympathetic grousing. He's categorized them ("Animals," "Sports," "Christmas" and "Misc.") and provided a guide to such common cheesy PG movie features as "Kids drive a car," "Kids hide a person or animal in their closet" and "The worst player wins the game for the team."

★★

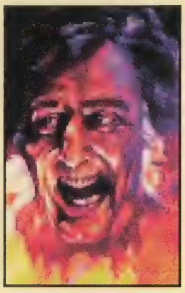
KRAPP'S IN LIVING COLOR EPISODE GUIDE

www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/4486/inlivingcolor.html

In Living Color is now in syndicated reruns; with its recurring characters and sketch comedy format, it seems tailor-made for the kind of nostalgic treatment many Web sites give to the

products of prime time past. So we were a bit disappointed with the sparseness of this site, which simply lists the sketches from each episode. Still, titles like "Star Trek—The Wrath of Farrakhan," "Andrea Dice Clay" and "Hold Up at the Sperm Bank" capture the flavor of the show pretty well; we may hang around here in hopes that it develops into a full-fledged fan page.

★



LOQUACIOUS NOGGINS

www.telusplanet.net/public/whitedm/noggins.htm

This site is, quite simply, "a non-comprehensive list of feature films in which at least one line of INTELLIGIBLE dialogue is spoken by a severed head." Who can pass that up? The list includes horror films, comedies and—our favorite—a movie called *The Forbidden Zone*: "After having his head chopped off by Satan (and finishing a duet with him, post-operatively), Squeezit Henderson sprouts chicken wings out of his neck, and the head flies around, tattling on the bad guys. In the context of the movie, it makes perfect sense."

★★★

OSCAR.COM

www.oscar.com

With all the weird personal sites on the Web, something as unrelentingly mainstream as an official Academy Awards site can't help but look a little dull; still, it qualifies as a must-see for movie buffs, with arrival and backstage photos from the ceremony and transcripts of the acceptance speeches. The biographies are fun (we had no idea James Woods went to M.I.T.), as are all the spiffy film stills.

★★★

RARE PERSONAL ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

joe.surf.com/movies/home.html

This site promises to be a video store panacea—it finds obscure movies geared to your taste, based on the info you provide about your entertainment predilections. Rate movies you've already seen, and RARE will fetch you a few titles you may have missed; our recommendations included *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928), *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955) and *Forbidden Games* (1995). Best of all, you can get a group prediction together with other users, so that you and your friends can work out a compromise before you hit Blockbuster.

★★★★

SMALL MOVIES

www.citynet.com/~fodder/

Refine your filmmaking techniques at this fantastic site devoted to 8 mm, Super 8 and 16 mm movies. It explains how directorial dilettantes can use small format film to experiment with lighting, lenses and film stocks on their way to becoming "accomplished motion picture artist[s]." We were intrigued by the suggestions for manipulating film by hand-processing it: "Oozing mounds of crusty chemical infections will bleach bleed belch all over your picture-perfect Kodak moments."

★★★★

15 MINUTES
www.15minutes.com
This self-described "virtual oasis in a cyberdesert" is the Web version of a hip little zine out of Austin, Texas. Campy graphics and a grab bag of articles ranging from "Mud Flap Girl's Hit and Run Sex Advice" to an essay on Miss America pageants keep you coming back for more. When you read the restaurant review of Wendy's, you can't help but wonder: Is this guy for real?
★★★★

BEN IS DEAD
www.benisdead.com
Remember Judy Blume? Darby does, and she wrote a whole story about it called "When Saturday Night Goes Retro it Becomes the Judy Blume Slumber Party." Anyone who wasn't allowed to read *Wifey* when it first came out because they were still in middle school will appreciate it. Don't miss the Top 15 Worst Songs (Number 1: "Once, Twice, Three Times a Lady" by the Commodores) and the history of retro.

★★★★

BROW
www.mcs.net/~brow/
Never ones to refuse an invitation to "intellectual debauchery," we had fun at this e-zine that "heartily and self-consciously couples raw and cooked, fluff and grit, meat and dairy, *sturm und drang*, Martin and Lewis"—and gives underemployed Ph.D.s something to do in their spare time. Read about the complicated ontological status of the baseball, or view the 10 plagues of Egypt as road-sign icons. Clever silliness.
★★★

CHIP'S CLOSET CLEANER
thetransom.com/chip/cleaner/index.html
Anyone who can get a *Playboy* playmate to record an audio introduction to their zine is pretty cool in our book. The origins of this zine go back to 1989 when Chip "pasted up some of the most entertaining, ironic and absurd relics" he found when cleaning out his closet and sent them out to a few friends. We particularly enjoyed the letter Chip received from Lever Brothers, makers of Lever 2000 soap.

★★★★

CRANK
www.crank.com
Crank is the Web version of a one-man zine that "continues to grow, much to the bitter dismay of several choice editors and writers." Chock-full of bile and fury, it includes stories like "Dear DMV," which includes a scanned copy of the letter informing him that his

license has been suspended in New Jersey and his response, which is only partially printable. "My car is sold. My license is gone. I've left the state."
★★★★

CREATIVE FOOTBALL COOKIE
www.mindspring.com/~bft23/
Creative Football Cookie is "a journal of grim jocularity created by people who suffer terribly from the total and inconsolable stupidity of others and are fed up with it." If other people make you sick, you can head here to find like-minded souls who "dread getting on elevators for fear that some cretin will want to discuss 'the weather.'" Who needs friends, anyway?

★★★★

THE FRAY
www.fray.com
There are plenty of well-designed sites out there, and just as many with compelling content. But how often do you get both in one place? Fray has it all. One of the best parts of the Web site is a narrative called "stoked," which tells the story of Derek Powazek taking a job at HotWired. Each narrative on the site ends with a section where you can add your own story, and many of the submissions are almost as good as the stories that precede them.

★★★★★

PLACING
www.placing.com
It's funny how seeing a certain brand of candy you used to eat when you were seven can instantly transport you back to your childhood. Placing features a brand-name product for each letter of the alphabet, along with a two- or three-sentence short story about each one. "'look at the squirrel,' i whispered. the rodent staggered towards us. it had a yoplait yogurt container stuck on its head. 'it has a yoplait yogurt container stuck on its head,' i said."
★★★★

PRACTICE
aaln.org/~misuba/practice/index.html
It's got photography, it's got fiction, but there's "no sucky poetry" to be found on Practice. A sporadically updated journal called "Tales From the Dork Side" chronicles the college life of the site's creator, Mike. The stories feature few, if any, graphics, but they read well. The comics are a bit strange.
★★★

THE REDNECK GIRL'S HOME READER
www.labyrinth.net/dwcarvell/bredarae/
Breda Rae likes bringin' sunshine into the lives of her readers, and droppin' her g's while she's at it. Her musings are available here in West Virginia-ese: "I don't like boxes of cereals and Twinkies to tell me what to do, like when I go to open 'em, and written on the end I'm lookin' at, in big print, is 'OPEN OTHER END.' Who in the hell do they think they are, tellin' me which end to open?" You go, Breda.

★★★

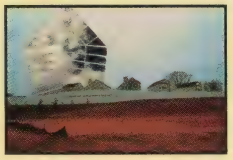
RIOTGRRL
www.riotgrrl.com
You don't have to be a grrl to enjoy this zine, although it certainly doesn't hurt. You'll find intelligent and often serious writing about anything from pornography mogul Larry Flynt (they think he's a scumbag, but hey, who doesn't?) to science fiction book reviews. The lime green background color on the intro page isn't the most attractive thing we've ever seen, but the graphics are sharp and fast-loading.

★★★

ROADKILL QUARTERLY
www.collideascope.com/rkq/
Just as the name would suggest, this site is "dedicated to the furry creatures who lay down their lives every year on our highways." You'll find more gory photos here than Elvis had hit records. And each one has its own special caption, like "Armadillo. Your shell didn't save you this time, buddy," or "A whole different ending to 'The Fox and the Hound.'" If you're really sick, you can even buy a Roadkill Quarterly T-shirt.

★★★

SALT E-ZINE
www.mindspring.com/~salt/
If you're not paying attention, you might not notice that this slick little zine has a Christian angle. Its goal is to "break through the cultural barriers of the 'Christian' and 'secular' worlds to work towards re-unifying God's creation." The site includes a terrific section called Images, with high-quality photography that still looks good on your computer screen.



★★★★

VALUED CUSTOMER
www.execpc.com/~jsilver/
Is there a point to this zine? Does it have some editorial direction? If so, we couldn't figure it out. The stories kind of grab you, though. Take, for instance, the one about the guy who always left weird messages on his answering machine. All his friends thought it was a joke when the machine picked up and they heard the door crash in, gunshots and then moaning and cries for help. It wasn't. A modern-day version of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf"?

★★★

KAY E. VANDERGRIFT'S SNOW WHITE PAGES

www.scils.rutgers.edu/special/kay/snowwhite.html

What are Snow White's other names? How many ways are there to talk to a magic mirror? Does the evil witch-queen dance to her death in a pair of red-hot iron shoes? The

answers to these questions are hidden in centuries of oral tradition, but a thorough look at the problems involved are found at this wonderful educational site. Hypertext links lead to an array of alternate versions of key passages, complete with study questions. The brief excerpts of criticism on the tale are well-selected and full of ideas both challenging and disturbing. Visitors can read, for example, about the "dialectic of narcissism" between the queen and the magic mirror, or link to a less academic (but fun) article titled "Is Snow White the Most Sexist of All?" ("The idea that everything works out perfectly for women who are kind, sweet and stupid is preposterous," complains the author.) Kay Vandergrift's generosity is further proven by the freely offered worksheets and extensive bibliography. This is definitely representative of the best that the scholarly side of the Web has to offer.

★★★★★

our pick

THE BAGPIPE WEB

pipes.tico.com/pipes/

Does your heart lie in the Highlands? Do you perk up at the sound of far-off pipes and the smell of haggis? Find all that you seek on the Bagpipe Web, where friendly folks will let you in on the latest in Scottish music and culture. Be sure to visit the Classified Section, where you can outfit yourself with pipes, kilts and ghillies!

★★★

HBO CYBERSOUL CITY

www.hbo.com/Cybersoulcity/

The appeal of this site has nothing to do with the coming attractions on HBO. Movie write-ups and pictures of Chris Rock and Laurence Fishburne are all well and good, but those who want to skip to the action will click onto the "Get Your Joke On" and "Poetry Slam" bulletin boards, where the elite meet to jive to the beat and serve those hucksta rappas a dish of defeat. This ongoing street talk battle of oneupsmanship is true entertainment.

★★

LIBERTIES BOOK STORE

www.liberties.com

At first glance, this site for the famous Florida bookstore seems best suited for the general reader, what with its monthly reviews of the latest best sellers complete with GIFs of gaudy jacket covers. But if you push onward you will find plenty to please the more discriminating bookworm. Features include a searchable online inventory, a chat room where you can chum it up with scheduled visiting authors, and a limited edition selection that includes a genuine autographed copy of Hillary's *It Takes a Village*.

★★★

NATIONAL CHARITIES INFORMATION BUREAU

www.give.org

If you're looking for a cause worthy of your dollars, take a look at NCIB's home page before you donate. Examine the financial information of a new charity every two weeks, or order a full written report on any one of hundreds of organizations evaluated by the Bureau. Just be aware that their "Nine Standards in Philanthropy" may not match your own, i.e., the U.S. Olympic Committee passes while the ASPCA does not.

★★★

THE NEW MELLERAY ABBEY

www.csbsju.edu/osb/cist/melleray/

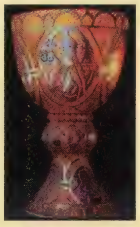
Take a virtual tour of a Trappist monastery in rural Iowa, book a retreat at the abbey's guest house and even see the personal pages of individual monks. (Father Joe says he's planted over 10,000 trees!) The highlight of the site is the Abbey News page, where you can follow a day-by-day account of the hardships and joys of simple Cistercian living. Be sure to read about the day Brother Neil turned the truck over and spilled a load of corn all over the highway.

★★★★★

OLD ENGLISH PAGES

www.georgetown.edu/cball/oe/old_english.html

Before there were station wagons and shopping malls, Anglo-Saxons were a brave warrior people of Northern Europe who left behind a unique treasure of early vernacular literature. This site makes available the original Old English texts as well as Modern English translations, links to beautiful photos of manuscript illuminations, and software that can help you learn and use the language. As if that weren't enough, now you can sign up for "englisc list," a new mailing list for people who want to communicate with each other in the "ealde spraec."



★★★★

PEERAGE CONFERRED

www.islandnet.com/~nregalia/nr-home.html

Have you long suspected that you are actually of noble blood? Reclaim your rightful place in the feudal order of things with a knighthood in the Order of the Commonwealth (no relation to the British Commonwealth) for only $150! For those of you whose pedigrees are a bit more

demanding, there's the title of Duke or Duchess for $1500, granted by His Excellency, Prince Douglas of St. Michel de Clermont. Past members include Vincent Price!

★★★

THE PERSEUS PROJECT

www.perseus.tufts.edu

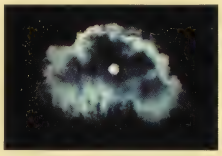
College freshmen working on "Oedipus Rex" papers must see Tufts University's Perseus Project, the primo site for online classical Greek texts. Browse through hundreds of English translations of Sophocles, Plato and dozens of other ancient authors. Interested in a particular word? Consult the online lexicon to find the Greek equivalent, search the text for other uses of that word and print out statistics on word frequency in any text in the database. Guaranteed to impress your English professor!

★★★★

TAO WEB SITE BY LANCE MURESAN

www.aa.net/~whippet/index.htm

If it is true that "we refine ourselves in non-being," then this site may be crucial to self-discovery. Come to know the unknowable, think the unthinkable, browse the unbrowseable. Those who find themselves lacking suitable background music for meditation (say, wind chimes and rainsticks) can order a tape of Lance Muresan reading the Tao. (Groove to "the lyrical, chant-like similitude with which each line is thrown to the listener.") Are you ready to "weigh the manifestations?"



★

THE WORLD OF FREEMASONRY

coyote.accessnv.com/cards/

No secret knock is needed to enter the home page for the Grand Lodge of the State of Nevada. Michael Rodgers offers a list of links that would exhaust a Grand Master of the highest order, including newsgroups covering such topics as Mormon/Mason relations, home pages of lodges and grand lodges, and even pages featuring enemies of Freemasonry such as Peter Trei and Lyndon LaRouche. A must-see for would-be initiates and conspiracy enthusiasts.

★★★

ZEMBLA

www.libraries.psu.edu/iasweb/nabokov/nsintro.htm

Fans of Russian-American author Vladimir Nabokov will recognize the name of this site from his classic poem/novel, Pale Fire. There are, of course, the obligatory indices, articles and bibliography, but what stands out is the interest demonstrated for the man himself. The many photos of the writer's houses and family grave sites bring to mind the unhealthy, voyeuristic obsessions of the typical Nabokovian hero.

★★★

AUSTRALIAN VAMPIRE INFORMATION ASSOCIATION

www.powerup.com.au/~darkpath/avia01.htm

Here's a hobby club for the '90s: the Australian Vampire Information Association. Mind you, you don't have to be a vampire—or Australian—to join (though our guess is that organized outings all take place after sunset); you do get newsletters and fact sheets, some of which are reprinted at this site. "Garlic: Bulb of Death or Just Bad Breath?" AVIA claims to have some answers.

★★

BOB AND DAVE'S WIFFLE BALL HOME PAGE

home.ptd.net/~murray49/wiffle.html

Back in the 1950s, David N. Mullaney decided to market balls with holes in them; the rest is Wiffle Ball history, and it's recorded at this very unofficial, very silly site, which includes a Wiffle Ball Babe of the Week page, a Cool Tips page (includes "advice on playing during a hurricane") and a page of Wiffle Ball Rules: "Batter is only allowed 3.6 pounds of duct tape per bat."

★★

BLOWPIPE HOME PAGE

echigo.hits.ad.jp/~dhiguchi/index_e.html

It's hard to resist a sport that mixes Yoga theory with the potential for severe injury. The Sport Blowpipe Health Method School in Japan sponsors a site that includes the basics of how to shoot ("The mind must be calm and in a state of tranquility when you blow the pipe") and instructions on making your own pipe. The site scores low on design and correct usage of articles, but what it lacks in style it makes up for in enthusiasm for this "miraculous sport."

★★

DIVE BUDDY WHITE PAGES

www.divebuddy.com

The "urge to submerge" can be satisfied at this site, a free service that links up diving partners all over the world. Divers from Northern Ireland to South Africa can befriend buddies for "the beach, boat and for beers later." Check out the pages from individual divers, whose stories include such stuff as "I have puked by the anchor line of the Cypress Sea."

★★

HOMEPAGERS' WEEKLY HOROSCOPE SITE

www.cam.org/~fishon1/horo1.html

These unapologetically New Age pages from astrologist Deborah Fenlon include not only the titular weekly predictions, but also herbal remedies, Chinese horoscopes and a guide to names and their meanings. The Zodiacally inclined can pick up free advice on relationships at the Astro-Love Charts, or a guide to good eating at the Astrologer's Cookbook. Skeptical? Check out the quote here from Carl Jung: "Like vintage years of wine, we have the qualities of the year and of the season in which we are born."

★★★

IGOLF

www.igolf.com

Judging from this site, those jokes about the obsessiveness of golfers must have more than a grain of truth to them. This staggering compendium of life on the links includes news, feature articles and trivia: We learned here that Bobby Jones' nickname for his putter was "Calamity Jane" and that Swiss Army Spike Wrenches make good gifts for golfers. After you spend a few days looking at everything iGOLF has to offer, you can try out the Golfsearch.com service on the site, which will guide you through over 1,000 golf sites and 15,000 courses.

★★★★★

SOCCER AMERICA ONLINE

www.sportsite.com/SA/

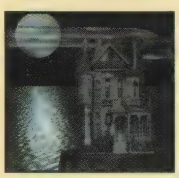
Presented by the Soccer Industry Council of America, this thorough e-zine presents news on national, international and college teams. Readers here get the chance to trade views on such issues as whether Mike Burns should be retired from the U.S. soccer team and whether the M.L.S. needs new jerseys ("Youth leagues have better uniforms!"). They also get to send questions in to soccer stars—Brian McBride, talking about the national team's trip to Scotland, says watching *Mission Impossible* with the other players was "about the craziest thing we did."

★★★★★

SPECTRE SEARCH

web2.airmail.net/spectre1/source/page0.html

Any old bed-and-breakfast can provide Victorian charm and eggs Benedict, but how many offer "a chilling scream from nowhere [that] sometimes drifts down the halls late at night?" This online directory to haunted hotels aims to help travelers find a few hair-raising thrills, or at least some good stories: Kings Tavern in Natchez, Miss., had three skeletons exhumed from its basement in the 1930s. Of course some (or all) of the crockery-hurling poltergeists at the listed establishments could be hoaxes, but aspiring Mulders and Scullys looking for something to investigate can come here for a place to start.



★★★

THE TELEGARDEN

www.usc.edu/dept/garden/

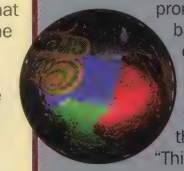
You can garden remotely at this University of Southern California project, which lets registered members use a robotic arm to plant seeds and water plants in a real, living garden. The project is designed to explore "a post-Nomadic motif where planting and agriculture require spatial and temporal continuity." So far the results, like the daisies, are looking up.

★★★★

THE BALL

www.avantamedia.com/~lou/ball/

We're not quite sure what would prompt someone to make a big ball of aluminum foil and then create a Web site about it, but we have to express our open-mouthed admiration for the care and dedication of the fellow who's done it here. "This," he writes, "is no ordinary foil ball, created because some crumpled-up foil was handy. This is a long term project." The chronicle of the ball proves it, meticulously recounting the process as York Peppermint Pattie and Cadbury Creme Egg wrappers slowly add ounces and millimeters to the ball's total weight and size. (It's regularly weighed on an electronic postage scale.) The ball, according to its creator, has "gone beyond the danger assessment of 'choking hazard,' and now enjoys the designation of 'heavable projectile, such as might dent one's noggin.' I'm hoping for 'blunt instrument.'" Site visitors can mail in foil wrappers as contributions, which "are probably not tax-deductible, but...are most heartily appreciated." They can also follow links from here to more pages about aluminum foil balls and rubber band balls, as if one weren't enough!



★★★★★

our pick

WARLOCK'S SKI AND GUITAR PAGE

www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Towers/4023/

Brian skis and plays guitar; if you do, too, you'll appreciate his lists of links. Visitors here can pick up a ski tip of the week ("Wipe each ski off before you put them away. Make sure all snow and water is gone. If you fail to do this, dumb little orange/brown spots cover your edges...") or take a Beatles quiz (get every question right and you'll win a place on the Beatles Know-it-all Page). They'll also find out what Brian thinks is cool: the band Phish, the game Doom and the word "gripes."

★★

YUGO NEXT

www.earthweb.com/yugo/

This site presents the creative work of a group of Manhattan design students assigned to transform Yugos, the "failed economy car[s] of the mid-1980s," into works of art. See the Yugo remade as an accordion, a confessional, a slot machine, a "giant tan phone." Weird!

★★★

THE INFINITY VOID
www.alpworld.com/infinity/void-f.html
Silicon Toad has been providing information to curious computer users for years; his new site, hosted on a skiing magazine's server, welcomes Internet novices as well as experienced hackers. Reading material here includes FAQs on anonymous remailers; computer security and firewalls; Cisco, Ethernet and Novell networks; plus question compilations on such subjects as "Pay-TV Hacking" and "How to Receive Banned Newsgroups." And that's just for starters. Visitors to the site can download crack tools, virus tools, anti-virus tools, disassemblers, key loggers and more; they can also link to ftp sites for IRC bots, password hacking wordlists, and texts like the "Terrorist Handbook" and the "M.I.T. Guide to Lockpicking." Lest you think the site caters only to criminals, check out the "list of known exploits that take advantage of various loopholes found in various programs and front ends." Silicon Toad kindly provides patches for system administrators with the misfortune to be running software so outdated that it has "known" loopholes. The disclaimer here goes under the header "Knowledge is Not a Crime," and notes that the Infinity Void "may, at times, contain information on activities or topics which are considered illegal. This information is provided for an informational and educational purpose only, and it is not intended to actually be used to commit the crimes that could be attributed to the provided information." And if that isn't warning enough, it adds: "Contents under pressure. Highly flammable. May explode. Kabooooom. Kaploweeeee."
★★★★★

our pick

2600 MAGAZINE
www.2600.com/
An underground community can hardly have a more official source than this: 2600 Magazine, the "Hacker's Quarterly," puts out a print publication that's available at the stands of national chain bookstores. But that doesn't mean it's mainstream—far from it. 2600 maintains an e-mail address for Kevin Mitnick, the man once described as "Cyberspace's Most Wanted," now in prison. It criticizes the Secret Service for its "behavior, vindictiveness and lack of concern for upholding the values of a free society." It also provides hackers with the means to meet and exchange ideas, both on the Net (at the alt.2600 newsgroup) and off, organizing groups to meet in such public places as "Richland Fashion Mall, 2nd level, food court, by the pay phones in the smoking section."
★★★★★

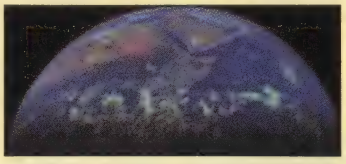
BLACKLISTED
www.blacklisted.com
Blacklisted Industries provides concise guides to phreaking boxes and virus creation; it also welcomes newcomers to the scene and dispenses some advice: "Try locating everything you can, on and offline, about hacking, computers, programming, cellular phones, whatever interests you. Then read it. Study it. Understand it. Never underestimate the power of knowledge—you can never know too much." With an "Ultimate Beginner's Guide to Hacking and Phreaking," a "Newbie's Handbook," a tutorial on "How to Crack" and a treatise on "The Ethics of Hacking," plenty of reading is available at this site, making it a recommended stop before you go bugging the folks on alt.hacking.
★★★★

CRYPTOSYSTEMS JOURNAL
www.neumann.edu/tpatti/
No cool graphics, no pop culture references and no random capitalization here; Cryptosystems Journal simply describes and distributes "state-of-the-art cryptosystems for IBM PCs and compatible computers" (as *Scientific American* put it). Read here about the mathematics of computerized cryptography, or become a subscriber: The site promises issues of the journal, plus diskettes containing source codes and executable files with "algebraically-based cryptosystems which create and utilize megabit (million bit) crypto-keys!"
★★★

CULT OF THE DEAD COW
www.l0pht.com/cdc.html
More notable for its personality than its informational resources, the Cult of the Dead Cow (cDc) claims to be a "neo-Marxist, anarcho-socialist guerilla unit forged for the sole purpose of getting on TV." In addition to stuff about TEMPEST technology and the history of hacking, we found out here that Christian bookstores are not good places to meet women, that beauty in skateboarding is a subjective phenomenon and that playing old 8-bit computer games is a good way to "forget how much you suck."
★★★

DEF CON
defcon.org
If you really want to get in touch with (and maybe eat, sleep, gamble or throw up with) your fellow hackers, head to DefCon, the official site for the annual Las Vegas hackers' convention. DefCon organizer Dark Tangent has a few things to hawk out of the virtual van here: T-shirts, audio tapes of convention speakers, Van Eck-proof PC cases ("Just what you need to fend off the black helicopters and the white vans parked out front"). Our favorite parts of this site, though, were the tales from various convention attendees: "While Citizen-X and PbS set up a computer in the room, I proceeded to leech our neighbors' phone lines. We ended up with three extra lines, which was a good thing cuz the casino charged 75 cents for EVERY call made!"
★★★★

FREEWORLD.BBS
www.netonecom.net/~gonzalez/freeworld/index.htm
It doesn't have any apparent connection to an electronic bulletin board system (BBS), but this "center of free speech and thought on the Web" does have regularly updated news links



of interest to hackers, reviews of related sites and a guestbook with messages that look to be from friends of the Webmaster (he calls himself Reverend Icon, but is addressed here as "Matt" and also as, uh, "my Romeo").
★★

THE HACK SHACK
www.ns.net/~willg/
This compilation of hacking resources opens up with the favorite quote from Thomas Jefferson ("Those who desire to give up freedom in exchange for security, will not have, nor do they deserve, either one"). The page most worth a look here is the Unix System Administrator's Resource Center, a colossal list of links that promises "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About System Administration" and delivers at least enough to make your head spin, with Solaris tools, Sun keyboards and sysadmin humor.

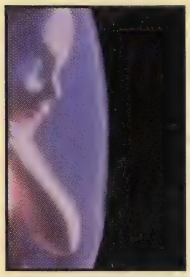
★★★

INFOWAR
www.infowar.com
We found it hard to figure out which readers Infowar was trying to attract—system administrators concerned about security, or hacking deviants looking to circumvent that security. Both, it looks like. This commercially supported e-zine offers moderated discussion groups on computer forensics, hacking and intelligence acquisition; it also tells readers how to get copies of their FBI files (easy and legal to get, also a pretty damned cool thing to show off to your friends) and reprints news stories under the subject headings "Privacy," "Espionage" and "Terrorism."
★★★★

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY INTERNET RESOURCE ARCHIVE

www.design.no/2001/

Open the pod bay doors here and you'll find an engaging tribute to Stanley Kubrick's vision of Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In addition to original art, fiction and essays contributed by obsessed fans, the site contains such "useless information" as "Zero-Gravity Toilet Instructions: The actual text of the instructions Heywood Floyd reads on his way to the moon." Thorough!



★★★★★

DEFINITIONS OF SCIENCE FICTION

www.panix.com/~gokce/sf_defn.html

If it isn't enough to know it when you see it, check out Neyir Cenk Gökçe's page for a few ideas on how to define the genre. How about "the hegemonic literary device of a locus and/or dramatis personae that (1) are radically or at least significantly different from empirical times, places and characters of 'mimetic' or 'naturalist' fiction, but (2) are simultaneously perceived as not impossible within the cognitive (cosmological and anthropological) norms of the author's epoch"? Then again, you could just stay on the lookout for ray guns and aliens.

★★

THE GRID

198.82.64.115

To find out what Web sites of the future (the year 2132, to be exact) might look like, visit this page put together by the multimedia designers at Plazma Designs. The cleverly designed plug includes ads for fictional products and institutions like the Psionic University of Cyrus: "Before I could only liquify small objects. Now I can levitate people on the subway!" An inventive commercial site that has one of the only worthwhile uses of "blink" tags we've ever seen.

★★

HYPE'S STAR WARS POLL

www.hype.com/movies/starwars/

Hosted by a team of Web designers, this unofficial poll ran on the Internet for six months; now the results are in. Find out what fellow Netizens think is the best of the *Star Wars* trilogy: best movie, best costume (hey, Han, nice pants!), best character. As the site points out, for a guy with hardly any lines, Boba Fett sure has a lot of fans. So does Wedge Antilles, who takes the number six spot for best character. And then there's the best line, delivered by Han Solo in the first film: "Uh...had a slight weapons malfunction. But, uh, everything's perfectly all right now. We're fine. We're all fine here...now...thank you. How are you?"

★★★★

ISLETS OF LANGERHANS

www.teleport.com/~mzuzel/islets.html

Subtitled "A guide to the literary topography of Harlan Ellison," this site was put together by a fan who undertook to catalogue and review all of Ellison's work after having "forgotten just how bloody many books the guy has actually written." The mammoth task, however, is accomplished with aplomb here. Webmaster Michael Zuzel chronicles a body of work that ranges from the "forgettable" novella *Doomsman* to the short-story collection *Gentleman Junkie*: "the only paperback Dorothy Parker ever reviewed—and reviewed very positively." A treasure trove for Ellison fans and a great starting point for the uninitiated.

★★★★★

LOST RACES OF STAR TREK ORIGINAL SERIES

izan.simplenet.com/lostrace.htm

How the Klingons evolved from guys with tans and goatees to the crenellated creatures they are now is a mystery, but at least they made it into later *Star Trek* series. Not all of the original show's alien races were so lucky. Gone but not forgotten, this page pays homage to the lives and civilizations of Ekosians and Elasians, Kalandans and Kelvans. If you're a die-hard fan, maybe you can help the Webmaster identify the alien dog that appeared in "The Enemy Within."

★★★

THE PRISONER

www.scifi.com/prisoner/

Part of the Sci-Fi Channel's site, these pages dedicated to the '60s TV series don't explain much, but then neither did the series itself. Starring Patrick McGoohan in the title role, it revolved around a secret agent ("Number Six") and his mysterious superiors who held him captive in a seaside town-cum-prison camp. The site lets you explore surreal images and snippets of text from the show: "A still tongue makes a happy life."

★★★

THE SCIFAIKU MANIFESTO

www.crew.umich.edu/~brinck/poetry/manifesto.html

Haiku isn't just for lotus petals anymore: The authors of this site think the minimalist poetic form is perfectly suited for such visions of the future as "Asteroids collide/Without a sound.../We maneuver between fragments." Though the emphasis here is on brevity, immediacy and concrete imagery within a "flexible" form, some of the best pieces confine themselves to the traditional 5-7-5 syllabic pattern of haiku: "Single Earth female/Looking for symbiosis/Male Terrans, please call..."

★★★

SCIENCE FICTION: A REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES 1900-1960

light.iinet.net.au/~yogione/sci-fi.html

Andrew Winter's tribute to science-fiction films begins with silent shorts like Georges Melies' *A Trip to the Moon* and continues on through such titles as *Forbidden Planet* and *The Fly*. Oddly, Winter doesn't seem to take part in the cult worship of 1950s "B" movies—his history places them in the larger perspective of sci-fi popularity as it's ebbed and flowed over the years. As yet, the site's a bit sparse, but it seems promising, and it includes a fun collection of science-fiction movie posters.

★★

SFLAAE/BS HOME PAGE

www.eecis.udel.edu/~masterma/ladies.html

What? You didn't recognize the acronym? It's the Star Fleet Ladies' Auxiliary and Embroidery/Baking Society, of course. Women might make up a minority of Star Trek fans, but that doesn't mean they're any less serious about it. These ladies started the auxiliary because they "were sick of the wasteful postings that were bandied back and forth on the Net, contemplating whose breasts held more worth, Troi's or Crusher's."

★★★

THE SPRAWL

www.geocities.com/Area51/Vault/5044/

If you've read the sci-fi bible *Neuromancer* and are ready for further cyberpunk spiritual training, head over to this "nigh complete list" of fiction, images and other related links. And if you're looking for a little healthy competition between subcultures, Webmaster Jesse Kulenski has declared Goths (they of the gloomy music, clove cigarettes and "chalk white face[s] with blue-black eye sockets") to be the natural enemies of cyberpunks. Let the battle commence.

★★★

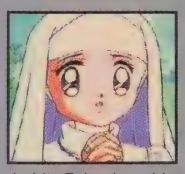
UNIVERSAL CHANNEL: WEIRD SCIENCE

www.mca.com/tv/weirdscience/

Some might simply call it a bad television program based on a bad movie. Dr. Arlen Bensen, Dean of Media Studies at Owensmouth University, describes it as "a serio-comedic allegory on the human condition. Wyatt functions as the 'Everyman,' or window character. The sins and foibles of mankind are illustrated through his actions." Thanks, Dr. Bensen. Now we know we should take this site a lot more seriously.

★★★

HITOSHI DOI'S ANIME PAGE
www.tcp.com/doi/anime2.html
Hitoshi Doi has an exceptionally detailed guide to the doe-eyed populace of the anime world. Even peripheral characters are minutely explored—Seira of the *Saint Tail* series, for example, is pictured in "many various outfits": her regular student garb, a wedding gown, a "snowman costume" and her nun-in-training habit. Episode guides are available for several series, including *Marmalade Boy*, about Koishikawa Miki, a "perfectly normal high school girl" whose "parents tell her they've decided to swap spouses with another couple they've recently met." Whoa. This site also keeps track of the seiyuu (voice actors), many of whom seem to be angling for singing careers, and lets you browse through the author's collections of anime cels and "UFO catcher dolls." One thing Hitoshi doesn't explain here: What's the deal with anime characters all having blood types? How often does Sailor Moon need a transfusion, anyway?



★★★★★

our pick

THE LYNDA BARRY PAGE
www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2770/LyndaBarry.html
Boston University student Rachel MacKnight put up this shrine to Lynda Barry, whose work she calls "brilliant if not mainstreamly (is that a word?) successful." Visitors unfamiliar with Barry's "Ernie Pook's Comeek" will find a few samples here, but the site will be most fun for those who are already fans. Barry hasn't hit the real big time yet (though her friend Matt Groening, creator of *The Simpsons*, has); if she does, we hope she'll still send her fans handwritten postcards like the one shown here.

★★★

CHICK PUBLICATIONS
www.chick.com
If you've ever wondered who's responsible for those luridly illustrated religious tracts you find in laundromats and at bus stops, this official site from proselytizing publisher Jack Chick will clue you in. These "inspirational," unintentionally funny cartoons are lambasted at a great unofficial site (http://boris.qub.ac.uk/tony/Chick/), but at Chick Publications, you'll find the sanctioned word. "The devil doesn't mind it when Christians hand out gospel tracts...just as long as nobody reads them. But when Chick tracts are distributed, he blows a fuse, because he knows that nobody can resist them." Can we get a witness?

★★

COMIC ART AND GRAFFIX GALLERY
www.comic-art.com
Comic collector and dealer Richard Halegua claims he's developing "the definitive encyclopedic reference," and so far, so good. We learned that artist Milton Caniff's early works, *The Gay Thirties* and *Dickie Dare*, weren't quite as exciting as they sounded—still, comic buffs should be thrilled with the plethora of panels and illustrations here, starting with the 1895 creation of R.F. Outcault's "gap-toothed street urchin," the Yellow Kid.

★★★★

CREEPY!
www.iarc.com/creepy/
Creepy, a horror comic book whose 19-year run began in 1964, rises from the grave at this official online revival. The history of *Creepy*, along with that of publisher James Warren's other titles, Eerie and Vampirella, is explored in reasonable detail; most fun is the Cover Art Gallery, a large collection of colorful grotesques. The site also lets you e-mail Uncle Creepy, the series' gleefully macabre fictional host.

★★★★

CYBER-CHICKEN
www.whoa.ca
Cyber-Chicken is a weekly Web-based strip that tries to take full advantage of its medium, with animated GIFs, sound files and Shockwave stuff. When we visited, way too many of the links were inoperative, but we got the idea: The strip's about a buff dude with a buzz cut, a beak and a bad attitude. Actually, since the title is "Cyber-Chicken" and not "Cyber-Rooster," we're not too sure about this superhero's gender and sexual orientation—maybe that tasteless lesbian joke is just a cover, so she (?) won't get kicked out of the army.

★

DRAW AND COLOR WITH UNCLE FRED
www.unclefred.com
"Uncle Fred" Lasswell is a syndicated cartoonist with a simple how-to-draw site; so simple that a 6-year-old could follow the instructions. Even so, we were totally drawn in (so to speak) by the chance to create our own comic-style pictures: a baby chick, a happy puppy, a "Jill in the box" (equal opportunity 'toons!). Uncle Fred plugs his "Draw and Color" videos here; the good-sized sample that this site provides makes for a charming waste of time.

★★

INTERNET CARTOONS FORUM
www.cartoonsforum.com
A "meeting place for cartooning in all its forms," this site is a labor of love created by Peter "Tooner" Oakley; when we visited, we found out how the "Comic Strip Classics" commemorative stamps issued by the U.S. Postal Service stacked up against James Dean and the Olympics. Topics on the message board range from how to scan newsprint pictures to where to find a "Far Side" mouse pad. The Forum also showcases some individual strips like "Eddie Peece"—"golden-haired hero tech boy from the future tense."

★★★

PERSISTENCE OF VISION
www.aros.net/~pov/
Walt worshippers of the world, unite. This is the online version of a print fanzine dedicated to Disney history; when we visited, we found an article on early audio animatronics, as well as a valentine to the "velvety, eternally adolescent, ever-effective rasp of [voice actor] Sterling Holloway." The site could use a bit more content, but has some excellent annotated links on animated art.

★★

POLITICAL LEANINGS OF SELECTED CARTOON CHARACTERS
shoga.wwa.com/~sluggo/misc/cartoon.html
Here's a small, appealingly silly page that speculates on the politics of pop culture icons. Porky Pig is "big on farm subsidies." Elmer Fudd, of course, belongs to the NRA. Our favorite: Donald Duck "frequently mouths off with convoluted theories about the Masons, the Illuminati and the Trilateralists, but no one can understand him due to his speech impediment."

★★★

THE SADDEST PLACE ON EARTH
www.webcom.com/shownet/saddest/
This site is simply a "collection of disturbed, puzzling and sometimes inexplicable comic-strip art" by two twisted cartoonists. It features fare like "Sludge: The Adventures of an Amorphous Black Spot!" and "Kirk Nerves: Philatelist." It's an opportunity to indulge in a fun Web activity: admiring the avocational weirdness of amateurs. We liked the psychopathic Kirk ("Can't you see I have exposed nerve endings dangling precariously from my head?") and look forward to the upcoming adventures of "Sedgewick Phenton: Temp Worker."

★★★

STINKY COMICS
www. stinkycomics.com
Mark Greene has plastered the home page for his comic strip with adults-only warnings: "If you're under the legal age for viewing naughty things as defined by our stellar leadership in Federal, State and Local law-making bodies, please be so kind as to log off....Boy, I can hear those kids logging off all over the country, can't you?" As far as we can tell, it isn't really pornographic. It is really gross. The well-drawn, bizarre strip features Stinky, "the nasty little man with the dirty behind." When you're done here, Mark offers more "immature, annoying links" for "the discerning Stinky reader."

★★★

FLAMETHROWER

CHALLENGING THE CENSORSHIP OF CRYPTOGRAPHIC SOFTWARE

by Peter D. Junger

Of all the goings-on in cyberspace last year, none attracted more attention from the press than the Communications Decency Act. Still, I cannot help but wonder why so little attention has been given—especially by the traditional defenders of First Amendment rights—to another free speech issue affecting the Internet: the government's efforts to censor the publication of information on making electronic envelopes.

Electronic envelopes may not be as newsworthy as cybersex or bomb recipes, but the press did a weak job covering the economic consequences of the Clinton's efforts to check the proliferation of cryptographic software. These articles about the cost to industry almost always ignored the more important costs—the loss of our privacy and the restraints on the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press—that are the consequences of the Administration's policies.

The media also have paid very little attention to the lawsuits brought by Daniel Bernstein, a professor of computer science; Phil Karn, an author of computer programs; and myself, a professor of law, that challenge the censorship of cryptographic software on the self-evident ground that forbidding us to publish the software is a violation of the freedom of speech and of the press. After all, even if the press wasn't interested in the free speech angle, it's interesting to note that if we win, we will have *pro bono* saved the software industry millions or billions of dollars.

Suits like ours are the only way that these costly regulations can be challenged in the courts. It isn't illegal for the Administration to regulate the software industry into the poorhouse.

Still, the claim that software is protected by the First Amendment doesn't seem to interest the press. But this year, things may be different.

At the end of 1996, the government issued new regulations that transferred the licensing of cryptographic software to the Department of Commerce. These new regulations, though similar in most respects to the old ones issued by the State Department, contain an important concession: The new regulations do not apply to the publication of recipes for making electronic envelopes in traditionally printed books, magazines or newspapers, even though they do apply to the same writings if they are published in electronic form or made available on the Internet.

This means that I can publish my casebook on "Computers and the Law," which deals with the many legal issues involving cryptography, as "hard copy," but cannot make an uncensored version of it available on the Web.

There is an inherent problem here that is going to afflict every magazine and newspaper that publishes an electronic edition. Under the new regulations, there are going to be articles—like this one—that can be published in hard copy but not in electronic form.

Let me give you an example: One of the easiest ways of maintaining some minimal confidentiality of communications is to use a simple substitution cypher, by which each letter in the alphabet is replaced with another letter. Here is a complete computer program, using the Unix utility "tr," that does just that: tr a-mA-Mn-zN-Z n-zN-Za-mA-M. This program instructs a computer to turn the characters A through M into N through Z and vice versa.

When this article is published on the Web, the little program will be replaced with the cryptic word "CENSORED."

You'd think that the media would be interested in this ridiculous infringement of their rights, to say nothing of our rights.

Unfortunately they're not. It's silly, after all, but is it news? "U.S. Government Does Something Silly" isn't the most attention-grabbing headline that I have seen.

But the new regulations contain another provision that may be newsworthy, a provision that transcends silliness. For now it is a crime to "export" (without a license) not only encryption software, but also virus checkers—programs that protect computers against infection by electronic viruses.

It seems that our government doesn't want anti-virus programs to proliferate. Otherwise, the spies and policemen and other terrorists of the world would no longer be able to inject a virus into your computer and erase its hard disk.

Now *that* is news. Can't you just see the headline: "U.S. and Singapore Plan Virtual Viral Warfare Against the Internet."

Now that is news.

Prof. Junger teaches at Case Western Reserve University Law School in Cleveland and is the plaintiff in a federal suit challenging the constitutionality of export regulations that forbid the publication of cryptographic software.

The Silicon Hillbillies

A Spec Script by Rev. Ivan Stang of the Church of the SubGenius

The Setting: The home of Mr. J. Average "Joe" LunchBucket.
Time: TOMORROW.

Pa: "MA! MA! I was down to the mall and I found just the thing for Granny! Look at this. Web-O-Vision. You hook it up to your TV and you can see that World Wide Web thing they're always on about."

Ma: "Now Pa, you know dang good and well that Granny don't wanna mess with all that child pronography."

Pa: "No, Ma, it's real easy, just like on them TV ads. This hippie was selling 'em down to the mall. He showed me. You just stick this end in the phone socket and this end in the TV set."

Ma: "Don't you be monkeying with my phone! It's gonna tie up the line and Maple won't be able to call."

Pa: "Now Ma, you settle down or I'll slap-ye-naked-and-hide-your-clothes. Here, I'mone hook it up, you go bring Granny in here."

Ma: "Granny don't want to see none of that child pronography."

Pa: "Ma, that hippie and me musta looked for child pronography for an hour, down to the mall, and we couldn't find any of it. Looky here, you know how proud Junior is on that spider Web site-bite-whatever-the-heck he has at college? Well now I figure Granny can look at it and surf around and all. That old gal needs something to keep herself occupied anyway."

Ma: "Oh, you just want to fiddle with it yourself. I just hate to think what that fool thing cost."

Pa: "Well that's the thing of it, see, it ain't a computer. It's only three hundred bucks. Anybody can work it. Now come on in here, Granny, and sit down. See, you just point this remote thing. Here Granny now look, we're gonna dial up Junior's home page. See how it plays pretty music while we wait, Granny?"

Granny: "Where's the Internet? Is this it?"

Pa: "It sure didn't take this long at the store. Oh, here it comes, it's tunin' in!"

Ma: "Granny fell asleep."

Pa: "Wake up, Granny, look! There's Junior on TV! Look—that's the top of his hair! Now you can see his forehead!"

Ma: "Granny done fell asleep again."

Pa: "Well...the hippie said, if Junior's home page is too popular, that's why it takes so long. Look, there's his nose."

Ma: "Does it have that home shopping channel?"

Pa: "Oh yeah, it's just like in those TV ads for that Online Soft thing. It's just like, uh, you know, surfing the Internet. Like they say. You know. There's encyclopedias and stuff... swimsuit issues...all that kinda stuff. You can get plane tickets and everything. Junior can send Granny his e-mail thing, and all like that."

Ma: "There's Junior's lip. I wished to God he'd stop wearing that earring."

Pa: "The hippie said it might not go as fast as on TV at first...but...now look, see where Junior has it saying, 'MY FAVORITE BAND' and it's all purple. Now watch. You just push this button...see how it rolled down the page? Ain't that something? Now it's blinking. Now push on that button there. That's called 'clicking on it.'"

Ma: "All right...Am I about to surf the Web now?"

Pa: "Yep. Here goes."

Ma: "Any minute. Oh look. It's starting. It's coming in. 'Welcome...to...'"

(The Phone rings..)

Ma: "What happened to it?"

Pa: "Oh dang it, it's the phone. Get the call. Well...we'll do this later."

• • • • •

(SIX MONTHS LATER)

Ma: "Joe, I'm cleanin' out the closet. Can I throw out this dusty old box?"

Pa: "Oh yeah, that's that Internet... you can throw that old thing out, hon, it was too slow for Granny."

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